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When the first issue of the *Koinonia Journal* was mailed out this past spring, the coverletter stated as an important task "to promote vigorous interdisciplinary dialogue." The forum style of the first issue suited this purpose very well, and therefore will be used again in the future. Although this second issue is stylistically more conventional, its three main articles try to meet our exciting task in different ways.

The life of early Christian communities, and especially the relationship of these communities towards "the world"—removal? or loyalty?—has long been the subject of research and speculation. The idealized and romanticized interpretation that a number of sectarian movements in the past centuries used as models in founding their own communities could have influenced even scholarly interpretation of the respective texts. Warren Carter's article, which applies Victor Turner's model of liminality, offers a fresh approach to the interpretation of the texts concerning these communities and their living arrangements. The "not yet" as it is expressed in the concluding sentence of the article regarding the time aspect in preaching by Nancy Lammers Gross might be a good example for the actuality of the problems approached in the preceding article. The homiletical problem about the use of time in its different dimensions (e.g., historical, actual, and eschatological) in Christian preaching is analyzed with the help of two contemporary systematic theologians: Gerhard Ebeling and Wolfhart Pannenberg. The contrasting of their respective theses on time in the (unusual) light of a crucial homiletical question in turn offers new insights for the theological discipline. Like the life of the early Christian communities, Psalm 126 has been a popular theme throughout (church) history. The beatitudes of the Sermon on the Plain have a famous reference to this psalm, but it also has been used in the liturgy, in hymns, and in the text of the *Requiem* by Johannes Brahms—mostly in a context of evening, last things, and death. In the course of a very thorough analysis, Scott Starbuck's article (last in the alphabetical order of authors) carefully addresses and discusses such presuppositions that have influenced the reading and interpretation of this psalm, especially a psychoanalytical understanding of dream.

This editorial also seems to be a good place to acknowledge the many good reactions, often expressed in glowing terms, that the first issue of our ambitious endeavor received. The team of editors is undergoing changes again, but the commitment and enthusiasm for the project remain as we currently plan the spring issue 1990 with another forum. We hope that the first two issues of *Koinonia Journal* represent an encouraging invitation to submit articles and book reviews for our graduate student colleagues! Subscription information can be found on the inside back cover.

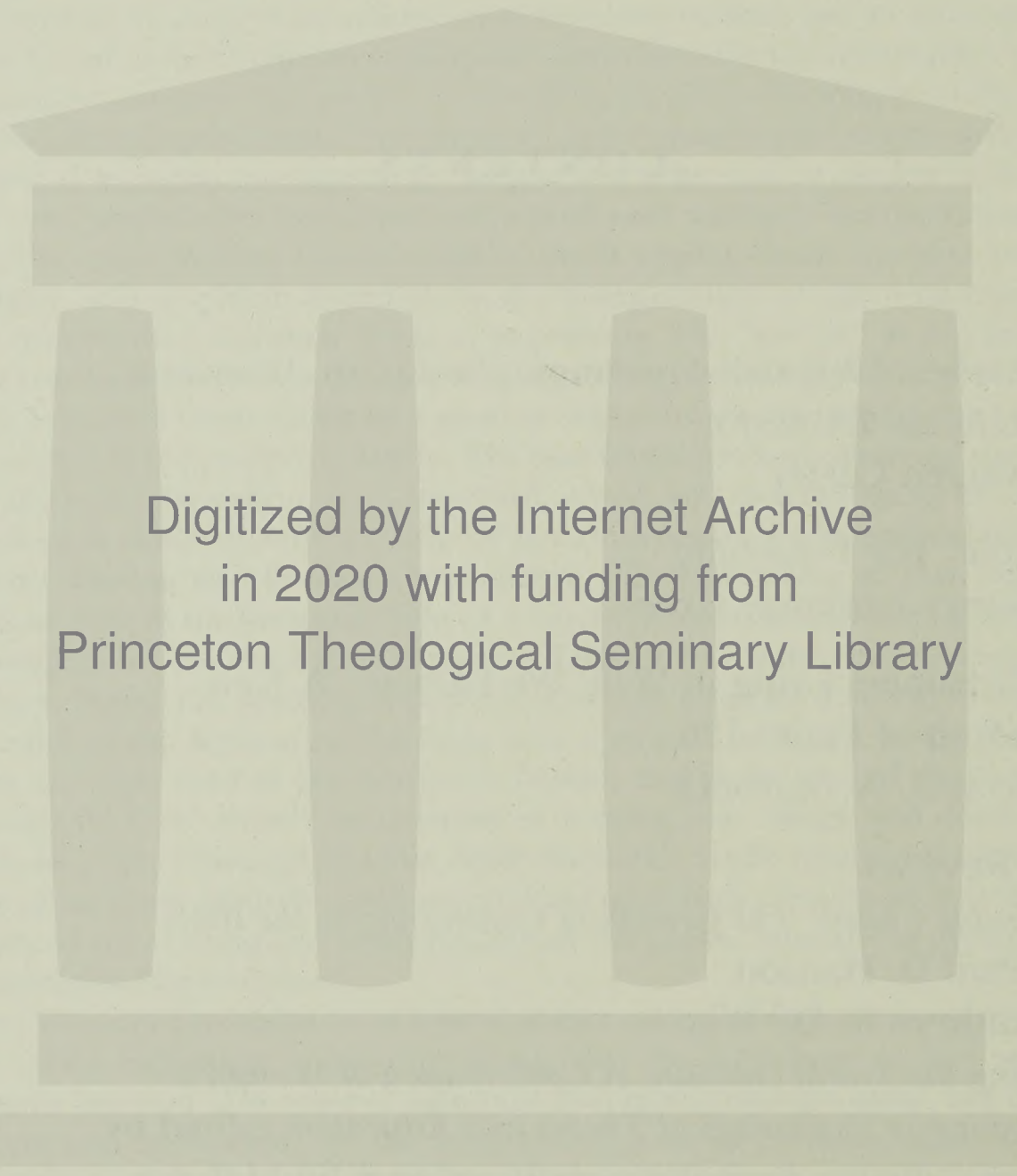
— REINHILDE RUPRECHT

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The Earliest Christian Movement: Sectarian, Itinerant, or Liminal Existence?

WARREN CARTER

The history of earliest Syro-Palestinian christianity between 30 CE and 70 CE has long been recognized as a crucial yet elusive period in the study of christian origins.¹ In the attempt to gain insight into the period, numerous methodologies have been employed—historical, form, source, tradition, and redaction criticism, as well as, more recently, sociological methodologies and models. Two areas provide the central concerns of this paper. One is a methodological concern—to continue the exploration of the usefulness of sociological models for the investigation of christian origins.² The second is to explore one aspect of the pre-70 Syro-Palestinian Jesus Movements—their relationship to, and interaction with, first century society. From an analysis of several *logia*, some tentative conclusions will be proposed about this interaction, and about the nature of the earliest communities. Two recent analyses provide the point of departure.

¹ Difficulties with sources include the late date of the Synoptics and Acts; the orientation of the Synoptics to their own communities; contradictions within the Synoptics, and between the Synoptics and John, Acts and Paul; the interplay of tradition and redaction.

² For previous attempts, and the methodological issues involved in the use of sociological models, see Gager (1982:256-265); Harrington (1982:148-161); Kee (1980:ch. 1); Meeks (1983:1-8 and introduction); Richter (1984:77-90); Scroggs (1980:164-179); Tidball (1985:95-109). The metaphors employed in the titles of the articles by Gager and Tidball illustrate the distrust which has at times been directed towards the use of sociological models.

I. THE NATURE OF PRE-70 SYRO-PALESTINIAN CHRISTIANITY AND ITS
RELATIONSHIP TO FIRST CENTURY SOCIETY:

R. SCROGGS AND G. THEISSEN

Two recent analyses of the earliest Palestinian communities which utilized sociological approaches, have attracted much interest. R. Scroggs (1975:1-13) has argued that the earliest christian communities were a sectarian movement. Drawing on sociological discussions and attempts to define a sect, he formed a composite, seven-feature model of a sect; Scroggs then argued that these seven traits are present in the earliest christian communities, giving them a sectarian identity.³ In a number of respects, his analysis is most helpful. He has identified dimensions of protest and rejection of the reality claimed by the establishment, and has highlighted the experience of love and equality within the communities, their eschatological orientation, and their separation from the world.⁴

Of fundamental importance for Scroggs' model of a sect, and consequently for his presentation of the earliest christian communities as sectarian, is his sixth characteristic—the sect demands total commitment from its members. According to his model, this characteristic addresses the need for the sect to be different, and to be kept different from the surrounding society.⁵ The sect's organization must separate its members from society and maintain its dissimilarity with a totally different lifestyle (Scroggs 1975:6f [note 23].20). Conversion to the sect means "conversion out of the world

³ Scroggs' seven characteristics are i) the sect begins in protest; ii) it rejects the view of reality taken for granted by the establishment; iii) it is egalitarian; iv) it offers love and acceptance within the community; v) it is a voluntary association; vi) it commands the total commitment of its members; vii) some sects are adventist (1975:3-7). It should be noted that Scroggs assumed the two document hypothesis, as I do in this paper.

⁴ For these emphases in previous scholarship, see Bousset (1971:ch. 1, esp. 51f); Dibelius (1965:69) argues that the early paradigm form developed when there was a "yearning for the end and a consciousness of estrangement from the world;" Bultmann (1952:37-62); Koester (1982:86-89.147-150) comments: "Discipleship . . . implies renunciation of the world and its social bonds."

⁵ Rightly Scroggs (1975:2 note 4) asserts against Weber and Troeltsch, and with Berger and van der Leeuw, that the correlate of "sect" is not "church" but the community, the society, the rest of the world.

into the sect, with the sharp boundary still being maintained" (Scroggs 1975:5 [note 14]). Clearly this sixth characteristic is a crucial one in Scroggs' argument and model. As B. Wilson (1973:21-26) has noted, "response to the world" is a central factor in defining sectarian existence.

But Scroggs does not subject this factor to the scrutiny it merits, and does not pursue in any detail its implications for styling the relationship of the Jesus movement to first century Syro-Palestinian society.⁶ For instance it is left unclear what form he envisages this separation and "sharp boundary" to have taken. Does he see a physical withdrawal from the world, either to some communitarian existence akin to Qumran, or to itinerancy, or does he envisage an interiorized (metaphorical) detachment and "separation"? The impression his sectarian model leaves is that of a very rigid separation, a literal abandoning of society. But even in the instances he cites, the situation is by no means "so obvious" or simple. The mandate "love your enemies" (Q—Lk 6:27||Mt 5:44) does indicate inside/outside separation, but it also necessitates participation in, and interaction with, the surrounding society, for the situation implicit in the *logion* to have arisen in the first place, for it to be corrected, and for the command itself to be obeyed. Or to take another example, to give up one's possessions (Q—Lk 6:29f||Mt 5:40-42; cf. Q—Lk 10:4||Mt 10:9f; cf. L—Lk 12:33 and 14:33; cf. Mk 10:28 par) can indicate a literal and total rejection of, and separation from, the material world. But such a conclusion is not automatic for at least three factors. Q contains sayings that focus on the heart, on the interior loyalty of the disciple (Q—Lk 12:34||Mt 6:21; Lk 6:45||Mt 12:34; Lk 11:34-36||Mt 6:22f); Q also contains *logia* that can be interpreted metaphorically (Q—Lk 14:27; Mt 10:38 "take up your cross daily" which is placed immediately after the *logion* of "hating" one's family); and thirdly, paradoxically, the traditions also include the promise (Mk 10:29f par) that those who

⁶ Interestingly, Scroggs (1975) devotes only seventeen lines to discussing this characteristic. Compare the (approx.) 174 lines given to the first characteristic. He also writes (1975:20) that this feature is ". . . so obvious in the case of earliest christianity [that it] can be dealt with briefly."

make such a rejection of possessions and family will receive “in this age manifold more” of these very things. The situation does not appear then, to be as simple as (literal) separation; the absolute commitment to Jesus and his followers that Scroggs is emphasizing is complicated by placing interaction and participation in society alongside rejection and separation. In terms of the relationship of the earliest christian communities to their surrounding society, a more fluid and complicated reality seems to be emerging, a reality that Scroggs’ sectarian model does not seem able to express. His model thus seems to misrepresent a fundamental aspect of the earliest communities.

A second analysis of pre-70 Palestinian christianity is provided by G. Theissen (1978). Theissen seeks to describe “typical social attitudes and behavior within the Jesus movement . . . and to analyze its interaction with Jewish society in Palestine” (1978:1). Theissen posits two dominant roles—the wandering charismatics, and local support communities. For Theissen the former are the more important group; in contrast to Scroggs, Theissen sees the latter as having almost no distinctive existence of their own (1978:17). The communities were less radical and demanding in their practice of discipleship than the itinerants who, like Jesus, literally renounced homes, families and possessions (1978:7-30). Thus he regards the wandering charismatics as the group most separated from the world, as the most world-denying element in the earliest movement. Theissen sees the Jesus movement emerging from a situation of social tension and crisis (“anomie”) in pre-70 Palestine, as one expression of a “search for new patterns of religious and social life” (1978:94). It was a renewal movement urging an ethic of radical love for, and reconciliation with outsiders and foreigners on the basis of the grace of God.

Theissen’s analysis is most helpful and stimulating, but in relation to our focus here it is vulnerable on at least two counts. First, methodologically, his use of the Synoptics as sources for the pre-70 Palestinian Jesus movement can be described as somewhat cavalier. He declares that the Synoptics are “the most important sources for the (pre-70 Palestinian) Jesus movement;” material of

“Hellenistic origin” has to be removed but “we can make use of all the rest” (1978:3). He qualifies this assertion only with a comment about the irrelevancy of the quest for the historical Jesus, but lacking at this point in his discussion and in the subsequent text is any discussion of how “Hellenistic material” is to be recognized and removed. Also not considered is the vital issue of the redaction of traditions by the gospel writers. Thus methodologically there is a lack of precision in discerning pre-gospel material. We are left uncertain as to whether Theissen is analyzing pre-70 communities, or the later gospel communities, or an ahistorical blend of both.

Further, his analysis of the communities as bifurcated and hierarchical (radical itinerants and sympathetic communities) seems to be overstated. The traditions do not indicate that some sayings (e.g. the renunciation sayings) were only applicable to groups that interpreted them literally and not relevant to other groups. Nor do these sayings require (as we noted above) a literal interpretation to justify their place, or describe their function, in the tradition.⁷ Against Theissen’s insistence on a social setting of homelessness et al., Kelber (1983:25) argues that it is possible for followers to identify with the anti-social sayings “as a matter of principle (without) applying them in actuality.” Nor do the traditions indicate that itinerant discipleship is necessarily more radical than the community pattern. Some may join the itinerant band and some may return home (Q—Lk 7:1-10||Mt 8:5-13; cf. Lk 8:39||Mk 5:19f); some may be sent out by the community for a while (Mt 10:5-15 par) rather than permanently as Theissen suggests. The hierarchical pattern appears to distort the nature of the pre-70 Syro-Palestinian communities. While Theissen’s suggestion that the term “community” here is misleading for the sympathizers because they “remained wholly within the framework of Judaism” has force, his lack of attention to the settled groups seems to minimize too much the

⁷ Eg., Q—Lk 17:33||Mt 10:39 “losing one’s life;” Q—Lk 14:27||Mt 10:38 “bear one’s cross.” Note R. Stein’s short study of hyperbole and exaggeration in the gospel tradition (1985). Functions of hyperbole (Stein 1985:89-97) include the performative (to get something done); the referential (to communicate a perspective); the mnemonic; and the emphatic (to facilitate decision). See A. E. Harvey’s review of Theissen (Harvey 1979:279-283).

attempts at self-definition by these communities within Judaism, and places too great an emphasis on the activity of the wandering charismatics as the shapers and transmitters of the traditions. The data seems to reflect more diversity of pattern, and the temptation to force it into one pattern has to be avoided.⁸

Scroggs' sectarian model and Theissen's almost exclusive emphasis on the radical wandering charismatics emphasize the separation of the earliest communities from their surrounding society. In our brief critique, we have indicated several factors which suggest that neither analysis presents an adequate discussion of the relationship of the pre-70 Syro-Palestinian Jesus movement (hereafter SPJM⁹) to its surrounding world. Further discussion of this question, employing sociological methods, seems both justified and necessary.

In pursuing this issue in this paper, I will focus briefly on several *logia* known to the pre-70 SPJM which directly address the question of their interaction with the surrounding society. Because of space limitations, the discussion will be illustrative and suggestive, rather than comprehensive. I will argue that these *logia* do not present a monolithic rejection of the world and society as Scroggs' sectarian model suggests; rather they indicate the SPJM's attempt to define its identity as being both distinct from, yet a part of, the surrounding society. This attempt at self-definition results from

⁸ For critique of Theissen's analysis (1978) of pre-70 Palestine (marked by anomie and deteriorating economic and social conditions), and his assumption that these conditions affected the tradition by heightening hostility to wealth, see T. Schmidt (1987).

⁹ This acronym is a variation on J. H. Charlesworth's suggestion of PJM (1985:145 note 20). The addition of Syria is justified on several grounds. i) Theissen (1978:1) has both Palestine and Syria in mind even though he usually refers only to Palestine in his text. ii) The addition of Syria is an attempt to be as precise as possible geographically. The essential absence of the Synoptic tradition from the Pauline epistles may support Theissen's claim (1978:111-119) that it was in the rural areas of Syria and Galilee rather than cities (Antioch, Damascus) that the tradition was known and shaped. Theissen notes (1978:47f) the general absence of cities from the tradition, a focus on villages or regions around cities, and the mention of rural occupations (farmers, shepherds). iii) Q material will figure prominently in our discussion; there is some consensus that Q's provenance is Northern Palestine and/or Syria. So R. Edwards (1976:150); H. C. Kee (1970:83.118f); I. Havener (1987:42-45).

the SPJM's commitment to Jesus of Nazareth,¹⁰ whose presence they experience, and it holds together in tension two contrasting elements (separation—involvement), situating the group in what V. Turner (1967; 1974; 1977; 1968:576-582) has called, a liminal position. That is, I will argue that the sayings in the tradition present to the SPJM an “inbetween” existence, an existence “inbetween” societal involvement *and* separation because of its exclusive commitment to Jesus. Such an analysis of liminality takes seriously the dynamic of participation and separation noted above.

II. THE SPJM'S INTERACTION WITH SOCIETY

The *logion* of rendering to Caesar and to God (Mt 22:15-22; Mk 12:13-17; Lk 20:20-26) provides a useful starting point for addressing the issue of the SPJM's interaction with its society. While this *logion* has generated much discussion,¹¹ particularly concerning its relevance and applicability for the contemporary christian community, our concern is restricted to considering what guidance the earliest christian communities found in this *logion*¹² for the very practical problem of their every day lives and interaction with their society. Should they pay the tax to the Romans or not?¹³

P. Bonnard (1963:322f) identifies three interpretations of this saying in recent scholarship. The “ironic” interpretation sees no interest on Jesus' part in any obligation to the state since the kingdom of God will soon bring to an end all other kingdoms. On this

¹⁰ Note in Q for example Jesus' call ἀκολουθεῖ μοι (Lk 9:59||Mt 8:22), a call to a way of life centered on the kingdom of God (Q—Lk 10:9||Mt 10:7) not the kingdom of Beelzebub (Q—Lk 11:14-23||Mt 12:25-30). Such commitment requires a disciple to be singlehearted (Q—Lk 12:33f||Mt 6:19-21; cf. Lk 16:13||Mt 6:24). See J. Weiss (1895:15-38); F. Hahn (1967:7-36); H. D. Betz (1967:27-31).

¹¹ Some recent contributions and approaches include J. D. Crossan (1983:397-401); C. H. Giblin (1971:510-527); L. Goppelt (1964:183-194); J. S. Kennard (1950).

¹² That the *logion* is very early in the tradition is widely affirmed. See M. Dibelius (1965:43), who lists it as a Paradigm, the earliest mission preaching; R. Bultmann (1963:26.48) identifies the central *logion* (Mk 12:17) as a saying of Jesus with the pericope 12:13-17 shaped by the Palestinian church.

¹³ For general background concerning the tax, see K. Weiss (1974:80-82); also P. Perkins (1985:1098).

view the question of whether the earliest communities were to pay the tax was simply irrelevant with “no practical importance” (Schweitzer:119f). The “anti-zealot” view sees Jesus opposing a refusal to pay the tax, but not offering an alternative teaching concerning interaction with the state. On this view the earliest christians would have paid, in contrast to the Zealots’ non-payment.¹⁴ Thirdly the “two reigns” interpretation sees Jesus supporting payment of the tax and thereby endorsing a positive role for the state in God’s scheme. On this view, the earliest christians legitimately participate in their society and pay the tax.

Exegetically, several observations confirm an analysis that the saying supports payment of the tax. Immediately striking is the formal parallelism of the text—

ἀπόδοτε τὰ Καίσαρος Καίσαρι
τὰ τοῦ θεοῦ τῷ θεῷ

with both clauses standing under the imperative ἀπόδοτε, a construction that urges compliance with both parts of the formulation. Ἀποδίδωμι is a forceful verb with the meaning of “giv(ing) or do(ing) something which one should in fulfillment of an obligation or expectation” (Büchsel 1964:167). Mt 21:41 (the tenants handing over the fruit) and Mt 20:8 (the paying of wages) provide good examples of this sense of fulfilling obligations. τὰ—the things of—would then indicate the duties or obligations that belong to Καίσαρι and τῷ θεῷ respectively (cf. Giblin 1971:521). The crucial question arises as to how these two sets of obligations are related. We have already noted the use of ἀπόδοτε; also to be noted is the joining of the two clauses by καί, functioning here in its most common usage as a coordinating conjunction linking two clauses (Blass, Debrunner, Funk 1961:227. Robertson 1919:1181-1183). The essential meaning seems clear—obligations to Caesar and to God are to be fulfilled; the tax is to be paid.

But to read the *logion* only as an endorsement for tax payment is to read it in a one-sided manner, ignoring the force of the sec-

¹⁴ This interpretation draws heavily on the actions of Judas the Galilean recorded by Josephus (*Jewish Wars* 2.viii.1; cf. *Antiquities* 18.i.6). The accuracy of the use of the term “zealot” for the pre-60’s period has been questioned. See M. Smith (1956:67-81); and D. H. Rhoads (1976:47-61.97-110); contra L. Goppelt (1964:184f).

ond clause, and ignoring the effect of the juxtaposition of the clauses. This latter factor forces us to consider the question of how these obligations are to be evaluated and assessed in relation to each other, and how the SPJM is to live in relation to both. While we have noted formal parallelism in the *logion*, this parallelism can not simply be extended to the content. While ἀπόδοτε urges fulfillment of both obligations, it is not requiring two equally ranked actions. For the SPJM, Caesar and God are not the same, and the respective obligations are not equal. The SPJM's traditions recognize supreme loyalty belongs to Jesus/God, and only in terms of this central loyalty can other obligations be assessed, permitted or denied. Hence we have a *logion* that recognizes the fulfillment of obligations to God and to Caesar, yet in the context of the wider tradition, the *logion* also critiques and relativizes obligations to Caesar by its elevation of obligation to God over Caesar.¹⁵ That is, it is by the content of the second clause (τῷ θεῷ) that the first clause (Καίσαρι) is legitimated. The construction of the *logion* brings the two obligations together yet clearly holds them apart, recognizing that while loyalty to God can embrace obligation to Caesar, the latter must not supplant the former. The “follower” must be on guard against such a thing happening.¹⁶ Participation in political obligations is thus permitted, but it is qualified by a dimension of separation, a safeguarding of the overarching loyalty to God. “Inbetween” such poles, neither wholly “in” the society, nor wholly withdrawn from it, the followers of the SPJM are to live.

This “inbetween” location and stance towards the surrounding society is evidenced in other ways. If we pose the question of the SPJM's interaction with society in terms of involvement with fami-

¹⁵ The wider context of the SPJM's traditions confirms this relationship of God and Caesar. In the Q pericope of the believing centurion (Lk 7:1-10||Mt 8:5-13), the centurion who is held up as a model of faith in Jesus, remains in Caesar's army. There is no call in the pericope for him to abandon his military service as a sign of his faith, but Jesus *allows* him to return home (Lk 7:6; *commands* in Mt 8:13). That is, participation in Caesar's army is brought under the supreme loyalty of faith in Jesus. Rome's demands can be met, but in the primary context of faith in Jesus.

¹⁶ J. Crossan (1983) highlights the theme of entrapment in the pericope, albeit from a very different perspective. Also to be noted in Q is the theme of the general danger of society to the follower's loyalty to Jesus (Lk 6:27-33||Mt 5:39-42.44.46f) and the need for watchfulness (Lk 12:35-48||Mt 24:42-51).

lies, we are struck by what appears initially to be contradictory material in the traditions. On one hand followers are to abandon their families (Mk 10:29 par), hating them (Q—Lk 14:26 μισεῖ) and loving Jesus more (Q—Mt 10:37). Burying one's father (Q—Lk 9:58-60||Mt 8:20f) is superseded by Jesus' call.¹⁷ One's family is defined no more by blood ties, but in relationship to Jesus and doing God's will (Mt 12:46-50; Mk 3:31-35). Yet other scenarios are presented which reject a literal withdrawal. Some new disciples are sent back to friends (Mk 5:19f), to home (Lk 8:39) and to their households and responsibilities (Q—Lk 7:1-10||Mt 8:5-13). Divorce, which would allow separation and withdrawal from society, is not permitted to the SPJM (Q—Lk 16:18||Mt 5:32; cf. Mk 10:11f). Of great interest is the nature of the division that occurs in households when one or several members "follow" Jesus. The division does not comprise social separation and withdrawal but occurs in the midst of ongoing life and family structures. Q records that ἐν ἐνὶ οἴκῳ (Lk 12:52), five will be divided, three against two (τρεῖς ἐπὶ δυσίν); the Matthean version (10:36) notes that one's enemies (ἐχθροὶ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου) are one's own οἰκιακοί (kin/household). The eschatological division on the basis of loyalty to Jesus is not experienced as social withdrawal, but in the midst of ongoing participation in family structures.¹⁸

How then are we to interpret this apparently contradictory material with regard to the SPJM? We can not resort to a one-sided reading which concentrates only on one set of texts and ignores the other (so Havener 1987:92-95). Nor does Theissen's solution of linking the renunciation texts with only one group (itinerant) seem convincing. As Kelber notes, positing one social group as the transmitters overlooks the possibility that others can identify with the content in principle without actually and literally applying it in their own living (Kelber:25f). Nor is it adequate to posit a development over a period of time whereby an itinerant movement

¹⁷ M. Hengel situates it in the ministry of Jesus and constitutes the likely Q form (1981:4). Such attempts cannot be our concern in this paper. It is sufficient for our purposes to note that the central content of the *logia* cited is pre-70. For discussion of the Q sayings see J. S. Kloppenborg (1988).

¹⁸ To be noted in passing is the non Q material urging proper observance of the law concerning care for parents—Mk 7:10f; 15:4f.

became a settled community because such a view does not explain why the earlier radical traditions continued to be transmitted, nor does it indicate what function they might have had alongside more domesticated and less radical *logia*. It is this juxtaposition of the two different types of material within a single *logia* collection (Q) that must be our concern—what function might the resultant tensions have had for the SPJM?

I would suggest that the function is the same as for the God/Caesar *logion* considered above. The follower of Jesus must “leave” his/her family, yet also participates in that family structure. Leaving indicates a separating, a distancing, a detaching, with ultimate loyalty given to Jesus. Yet this world and its societal structures are not to be abandoned. Duties and obligations within one’s family are to be fulfilled because it is precisely within everyday life that obedient loyalty to Jesus is expressed. Participation in society, yet detachment from it, again appears as the central dynamic for the SPJM’s interaction with society. It is “in the midst of,” “betwixt and between” the tensions of the two elements and traditions, “inbetween” Jesus and society, neither wholly one or the other, that the SPJM is to exist.

Other areas of tension could be investigated which would produce a similar analysis.¹⁹ However, space permits brief consideration of only one other area, the apocalyptic expectation of the SPJM. Scroggs’ sectarian analysis emphasizes the early christian communities were oriented to the future, with little concern for the present world. There is little doubt that Scroggs is, in part, correct; their loyalty to Jesus directed them to the future and the Day of the υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου when those who had rejected Jesus and the kingdom would be judged (Q—Lk 10:10f||Mt 10:14f) and the SPJM vindicated (Q—Lk 17:26-36||Mt 24:37-42; cf. Mk 13:24-27). But such an orientation must be nuanced by a recognition of

¹⁹ For example, i) the material on money/possessions reflects a similar ambivalence. This is evident in the Mammon/God *logion* (Q—Lk 16:13||Mt 6:24) which in the one statement draws together yet drives apart these two claimants on a disciple, subordinating Mammon to God but without demanding withdrawal into asceticism. ii) A similar “neither-nor,” “betwixt and between,” stance is reflected in relation to Jewish religious traditions where the law can be upheld (Q—Lk 16:17||Mt 5:18) yet observance can be set aside (Q—Lk 9:58-60||Mt 8:20f). The words of Jesus place the SPJM “inbetween” upholding yet setting aside the law.

the significance of the present, the now, for the SPJM. For instance, the scenarios of the end depict disciples involved in everyday business, disciples not withdrawn or separated from society. The Day of the υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου will divide those in family structures, those in the field, those grinding at the mill (Q—Lk 17:34f||Mt 24:40f), those in the house (Mk 13:15f par). Further, the time before “that Day” is a time of mission in society, of proclaiming the Kingdom to it.²⁰ And, as we noted in the *logia* discussed above, loyalty to Jesus directs the SPJM to the present. In the time “between” the present and that Day, in the meantime, the SPJM is not to withdraw passively—it is to be involved in, but not seduced by, its hostile society until the coming of the υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου (Q—Lk 12:39f||Mt 24:42-44). The SPJM lives in this interim (Edwards 1976:127), in a temporal tension between the present and the future, between involvement in society and commitment to Jesus. “Inbetween” these poles and tensions, the SPJM is to live, not belonging to its society yet not allowed the option of withdrawal, participating in the society yet separated somewhat from it, not yet vindicated by the υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου yet knowing that hope. Whether such an existence was the actual reality of social interaction experienced by the SPJM is another question, which we will return to below.

III. THE SPJM, V. TURNER, AND LIMINAL EXISTENCE

In the work of Victor Turner, “inbetween” states are deemed to be very important. Turner (1977:esp. 95ff) labels such a position as “liminal,” and argues it is experienced by “threshold people.” Turner describes liminal existence as being “neither here or there,” as being “betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention,” as being marked by ambiguity. Liminality is a period of transition in moving from one social-cultural position, status, or role to another position or role by means of a *rite de passage* whereby those undergoing the transition are “fashioned anew and endowed with additional powers to enable them to cope with a new station in life.” This frequently

²⁰ For discussion of the mission passages in Q, see P. Meyer (1970:405-417).

necessitates a humiliation, a going down, before the exaltation, the coming up. What is particularly significant is Turner's emphasis on the way liminal rites and existence blend together diverse elements. They are moments "in and out of time . . . in and out of secular social structure." Differing structures—the hierarchical, the fixed, and the undifferentiated and simple, structure and anti-structure—are juxtaposed and alternated.

This feature of the blending of diverse elements is akin to the reality we have noted in the *logia* considered above. Antithetical entities—society (political power, family, possessions) and loyalty to Jesus, the present and the future—are drawn together and juxtaposed, setting forth a "betwixt and between" existence. God and Caesar are linked yet differentiated; God and Mammon are drawn together yet forcefully opposed; treasure now on earth is set beside and against treasure yet to be in heaven; involvement in one's family is upheld yet that family is to be abandoned for the new family of those who trust and obey Jesus. It is a liminal existence that is set forth.

Turner notes other features of liminal existence. Liminality is marked by a sense of transition rather than a static state; by *communitas*—a close intimate existence of equality—rather than inequality and hierarchy; by a common goal not heterogeneity; by total obedience to the highest power; by continuous rather than intermittent reference to mystical powers; by the acceptance rather than the avoidance of pain and hardship; by the qualities of humility and unselfishness. While it is not possible here to draw all the connections between these features and the traditions of the SPJM, several aspects are immediately evident from our discussion above. The SPJM's existence is defined by transition as they await the vindication of the υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου; this Day is the goal of the movement; total obedience to God/Jesus is demanded, and in reference to him and guided by his words the movement seeks to determine its living and interaction with society; humility (cf. Q—Lk 13:30||Mt 20:16; Q—Lk 17:33||Mt 10:39) is to be the hallmark, as is mutual care within the movement (Q—Lk 17:3f||Mt 18:15.21f). The traditions of the SPJM embrace liminal existence.

Having noted these initial points of commensurability²¹ between our data and Turner's concept, a potential difficulty needs to be addressed. Turner perceives liminality predominantly as a ritual process of successive stages from lower to higher positions through a limbo of statuslessness (Turner 1977:97). Expressed in these terms the applicability of his concept to the SPJM might seem unlikely. However Turner also argues that liminality can take diverse forms of expression. One such form is that this transitional status and its qualities can become an institutionalized state, a permanent state where the "passage" qualities of liminal existence remain. In this state of permanent "outsiderhood," *communitas*, and anti-structure, liminal existence is lived (1977:96.125f.ch. 4). The *terminus ad quem* for such a group is, typically according to Turner, not on earth as a higher social position or role, but is some sort of heavenly existence. Millenarian movements frequently exemplify these features. The attempt to create a permanent state of liminality indicates that transitoriness is the essential identity of such groups.

Turner's recognition of the institutionalizing of liminality is important for our discussion of the function of these *logia* for the SPJM. They seek to preserve the movement's transitional nature awaiting the Day of the υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου. But also, they address the issue of the movement's interaction with society in the interim. The *logia*'s demands of loyalty to Jesus as well as participation in society means the SPJM is kept in contact with, yet is divided from, the world. In such a marginal, "inbetween," liminal place the *logia* give to the SPJM its identity. To lose liminality would mean ceasing to be marginal, ceasing to be "inbetween," ceasing to be in transition. To lose liminality would mean to lose the kingdom and the *terminus ad quem*; it would mean wholly joining the world. The *logia* express liminality as the foundation of the SPJM's existence.

²¹ Commensurability—establishing points of appropriate contact between a sociological theory or heuristic model and the data under consideration—is an attempt to prevent the use of an inappropriate model that would distort, rather than illuminate, the data. See S. K. Stowers (1985:149-181, esp. 152-168).

In proposing such an analysis of the interaction of the SPJM with their society, one final issue requires consideration. In such a concept of interaction, do the *logia* reflect the actuality of the movement's existence, or a vision of what some consider it should be? Is this how it really was or have situations of failure or compromise or pressure caused some to attempt to sharpen the demand and vision?²² Perhaps the movement found such liminal existence very hard to sustain and the *logia* functioned to strengthen resolve as it gave way. Perhaps the prominence of the motif reflects the forceful place it actually held in legitimating the movement's living.²³

Any answer to this difficult question must be tentative.²⁴ One clue is to note the proclamatory nature of the expressions where imperatives and warnings of denial dominate. The urgency and uncompromising presentation, which lacks any catalogue of achievement, may perhaps indicate a perception (by how many?) that the movement's identity is under (specific or perpetual?) threat, or has been compromised. In these terms, the *logia* would present an ideal vision that is grounded in part in reality, but that reality is perceived to be less than perfect. If this tentative suggestion is plausible, it remains impossible to determine how widely such a perception was shared or from what (a particular incident? ongoing life?) it originated.

To summarize: we have considered—albeit briefly—the question of the interaction of the earliest christian communities with their society and have sought to draw some conclusions about the nature of these communities. We have noted that the sectarian model

²² To pose the question in Weberian terms (which cannot be developed here)—has the charisma of Jesus become so routinized that some urged a return to “pure” origins? For his theory of charisma, see M. Weber (1947:358-373; 1963:46-79; 1946:245-252). For a critique of Weber, see B. J. Malina (1984:55-62).

²³ Turner (1977) stresses that communal life can sustain a commitment to a rigorous vision. Kelber (1983:19) speaks of a “powerful oral synthesis” binding speaker, hearer and words, and producing strength and commitment.

²⁴ In seeking to locate sociological realities in written texts, we are face to face with one of the major methodological difficulties in utilizing sociological theories in the study of christian origins. Do texts mirror reality or seek to impart another reality? Hence considerable caution is required in formulating any response to the question posed here.

Scroggs emphasizes the community over against and separated from society. Theissen's analysis of the wandering charismatics also stresses this formulation, and pays little attention to the settled communities. Yet the *logia* considered above indicate that such a view can only be a partial statement of the interaction of the SPJM with society, and is an inadequate description of the nature of these communities. The *logia* do not allow an unequivocal withdrawal, but they urge an ongoing involvement in society while simultaneously maintaining absolute loyalty to Jesus/God. This dynamic creates a "neither-nor," an "inbetween" existence of participation yet withdrawal, as it holds together yet sets apart society and God, the present and the future.

A model based on liminality embracing ambiguity, transition, and the paradox of involvement yet separation, seems to express more accurately the essential identity of the earliest SPJM and its interaction with society, than does a sectarian or hierarchical model.

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A “Time” For Preaching

NANCY LAMMERS GROSS

Students of preaching, and many experienced preachers, are increasingly confused and concerned about the role of the preacher in the preaching endeavor. In large part because of the rising importance of hermeneutics in the field of homiletics, questions of biblical authority, validity in interpretation, and the authority of the preacher are being asked in preaching classes and continuing education events.

Wherein lies the authority of the preacher? At least we used to be able to tell everyone “what the text says.” Now we have to listen to the text tell us who we are. What constitutes the authority of the scriptures? There was a time when the study of the scriptures could yield to me what a particular biblical writer had in mind. Now, in many hermeneutical approaches, I cannot be confident of knowing the mind of the author. We are on shifting ground in homiletics, and while the shift is exciting, many crucial questions still remain.

The motivating question behind this essay is connected to the question of authority in preaching. “How is it that we can call the sermon, the human word, the ‘Word of God’?” Karl Barth’s formula of the tripartite Word of God: the Word preached, the Word written, and the Word revealed, remains compelling, but at least for preaching, needs a substantial re-thinking as homiletical theory grows and develops.

Barth speaks of the continual becoming and renewal of the Church when he says, “proclamation must ever and again become proclamation” (Barth 1975:88). Ebeling claims that the process from text to sermon can be characterized by saying, “proclamation that has taken place is to become proclamation that takes place”

(Ebeling 1963:329). We ask, how does the human word spoken by the preacher become proclamation once again? How does the human word become the Word of God?

In addition to the challenges presented to homiletics by hermeneutics, are the challenges presented when theology attempts to enter into dialogue with the human sciences. The concern is that theology has become a "ghetto language" (Ebeling 1967:24; see also Pannenberg 1963), impoverished by inbreeding and lack of communication with the world of scholarship outside of the theological realm. One of the leading culprits here is theology that is done "from above" in which faith in the divinity of Christ is assumed, and, therefore, not only the language which affirms this but also the entire conversation in which this language appears is inaccessible to anyone who does not so believe.

This essay represents an attempt to deal with the question raised above, that is, "how is it that we can call the sermon the 'Word of God'?" while at the same time taking into account a "theology from below" approach. Our procedure will be to engage a conversation between Wolfhart Pannenberg and Gerhard Ebeling regarding each one's understanding of "word of God."

Pannenberg argues for an understanding of "word of God" that can be accepted in the human science circles of linguistics. He uses Ebeling's definition of "word" to advance his argument, but then critiques Ebeling for what he perceives to be Ebeling's use of the concept of "myth." According to my analysis, however, Pannenberg attributes to Ebeling an inaccurate definition of myth, and then wrongly dismisses Ebeling based on that definition of myth. In fact Ebeling's concept of myth is dependent upon a fuller linguistic understanding of "time."

It is the element of "time" that is the crucial differentiating factor between Pannenberg's and Ebeling's arguments. It is my thesis that "time" is a definitive factor in how one views the sermon as the "Word of God," and that Ebeling has not only a fuller linguistic understanding of time, but a more adequate understanding of time for the purposes of preaching.

The essay is organized into three sections. The **first** section presents what Pannenberg says about Ebeling and Ebeling's under-

standing of “word,” and therefore, “word of God.” The **second** section is an Ebeling answer to Pannenberg based on Ebeling’s understanding of time, and therefore, myth. The **third** section will return explicitly to the question raised at the beginning to see if we are any closer to a new understanding of sermon as Word of God.

PANNENBERG ON EBELING

In his study on the “Foundations of Culture,” Pannenberg (in 1985:315-396) is looking for a way to understand the concept of the “word of God” without resorting to mythical or magical definitions which depend upon an individual’s willingness to believe in a “mythicomagical” divine inspiration (1985:384f). To put it another way, Pannenberg asks how we can reflect theoretically on language in such a way that our study of language and the religious thematic can come together without resorting to a mythicomagical understanding of divine inspiration?

By “mythical” Pannenberg understands a “word in which the reality itself is present, and present in such a way that the reality automatically makes itself known.” The mythical understanding of words is evident in various religious accounts of creation where the world came into ordered existence out of chaotic and primordial time through a mythical experience. Not only does the reality (ordered existence) make itself known through the mythical word, but also the “experiential context” is known such as the kinds of divinities associated with the world which has been created.

The “magical” use of words is similar, but not identical to the mythical use of words. By “magical” Pannenberg understands there to be a real connection between the word and the thing the word names that makes it possible, by means of the word, to control the thing named. In the magical use of words a human agent is understood to be in control of the thing or person named by use of the word referring to the person or thing. In mythical experience things make themselves present through words. In magical experience, a controlling agent has power over the word. In mythical language, however, the magical use of words is often attributed

to the divinity itself, especially in relation to accounts of creation. But generally speaking, divinity is thought to be behind the mythical experience and use of words, while the human agent is thought to be in control of magical experience or use of words.

Regardless of the ways one may understand the shades of meaning related by the words "myth" or "magic," or in combination "mythicomagical," Pannenberg's critique of traditional theology is that we are expected to understand the "word of God" within this framework. When critical biblical research is conducted mythical elements in the scriptures are easily recognized and are dealt with in a scholarly manner. Pannenberg points out, however, that when it comes to considering the scriptures as word of God, Christian theologians are slow to acknowledge the close connection between mythical thinking and "word."

One of the attempts in contemporary theology to overcome this troublesome connection between myth and word was Rudolph Bultmann's program of demythologizing (cf. Bultmann 1953). Pannenberg tips his hat to Bultmann, but points out that while Bultmann's program aimed at converting the biblical language from a first century three-tiered cosmological understanding of the world and language system to a contemporary language system, Bultmann's program did not deal with the mythical structure of the divine word itself. Exchanging one set of words for another, and even one world view for another, does not get at the root of the problem. Only when the mythical structure itself has been recognized can specific questions be asked regarding "specific traits in biblical conceptions of the divine word that take them beyond the mythical understanding of words" (1985:386).

Another modern attempt to rescue "word of God" from a mythicomagical understanding has been to see it in light of Logos theology. The thing named is present through the medium of sound by virtue of the notion of the divine Logos becoming incarnate. Pannenberg is critical of this because it too has embedded in it the basic mythical understanding of the word (1985:386).

Pannenberg sees this happening when theologians take over the speech act theory. The whole idea of performative speech, by

which the nature of the thing said establishes the truth of what is said by use of the word itself, is struck down by Pannenberg because it attributes to God truths which are spoken by humans (1985:387). He further critiques the performative speech-act theory because it brackets the problem of verification and falsification.

The question then still remains. How do we reflect theoretically on language in such a way that our study of language and the religious thematic can come together without resorting to a mythicomagical understanding of divine inspiration? Pannenberg appeals to Ebeling because Ebeling's hermeneutical analysis of language is superior to other models now being proposed to address this problem. His model is also attractive because Ebeling has made the concerns of theology the guiding light in his search for a deeper understanding of language. Other proposed models are rejected for being one-sided theological applications of secular theories of language. Pannenberg quotes Ebeling to support his move that theologians must engage in a theoretical study of language because "that which the gospel contains cannot come to us except in the form of a linguistic communication" (1985:389f).

Pannenberg points out that in spite of their differences, both Bultmann and Barth hold in sharp opposition the word of God to human experience. Ebeling, in contrast to Bultmann and Barth, claims that the word of God is " 'not . . . any separate, special reality' alongside human speech; it is nothing else than 'true, proper, finally valid' word. The essence, therefore, of human language itself can be understood only in the light of God" (1985:392; quoted from Ebeling 1963:324).

He accurately points out how Ebeling sees language as essentially a communication event. Communications that disclose truth and the truth about human existence are promises whereby the speaker pledges himself or herself to disclose to another the future, or to disclose that which is hidden. The full value of word and language can be seen, therefore, in terms of the gospel in that the gospel is the promise of God. "The gospel is the word that in

an unqualified way opens up the future and discloses existence; it is therefore word in the full sense" (Pannenberg 1985:393).

Showing that he is aware of the emphasis Ebeling puts on temporality in his understanding of human linguisticity, Pannenberg gives attention to Ebeling's refusal to see language in terms of its "significatory" function. When language is regarded in its significatory function, words are merely signs which point to concrete referents; it is a mathematically analytical view of language. To understand the word as a sign with a concrete referent is to reduce words to ciphers and syntax to calculus, and it is to cut the word off from its constant source of life: time (1985:394; also Ebeling 1967:16f). The spoken word is always a temporal word, placing in perspective the speaker in reference to that which is spoken. The basic unit of language is the sentence and the sentence always places the subject in the medium of time.

Recognizing that the element of time leads Ebeling to the observation that language can make both past and future present, Pannenberg notes Ebeling's claim that even the divine "mystery" can be accessible to human beings only through the word. For the word "makes present what is not at hand, what is absent." At the same time, in every word event the divine mystery is "'present as a depth dimension' to which every word owes its existence" (Pannenberg 1985:394).

For the divine mystery to be present in word as "depth dimension" means the spoken word cannot exhaust the divine mystery or reduce it to banalities. For the divine mystery to be present in "every word event" as a depth dimension to which "every word owes its existence" is to point to the reality that language comes from outside ourselves. The very possibility of language comes to us from outside ourselves. Thus, every word, in addition to its variant contextual meanings and in addition "to rendering present what is not at hand," every word serves the symbolic function of pointing to the presence of the divine mystery as a depth dimension implicit in the word.

Here Pannenberg is pointing to Ebeling's argument that language is the ground on which to define humanity's basic situation.

The meaning of the word "God" is the basic situation of humanity as word situation. "God" is not a sign which points to a concrete referent. Rather, to say "God" is to create a situation. For it is precisely at the point of speaking the word "God" that we prove ourselves not to be the masters of ourselves, but that we live only at the power of a word that is not our own, a word that is outside ourselves (Ebeling 1967:foreword.27-30). Even though the depth dimension is present in the word "tree" or "dog" or "highway," it is the word "God" which points to our awareness that we need the word to be human, that our human situation is a word situation, and, once again, that the word comes from outside ourselves.

Thus the "depth dimension" that is present in the word "God" is the ground of the possibility of language against which the figure of any particular language event occurs. This is precisely the connection between language and the religious thematic for which Pannenberg is looking. Now Pannenberg can assert that the "symbolic function" of the word as rendering present what is not at hand can be linked to the idea of God when he introduces the "indeterminate totality of meaning that is present in the spoken word" (Pannenberg 1985:394).

The "indeterminate totality of meaning" serves the same purpose for Pannenberg as the "depth dimension" does for Ebeling. Only now Pannenberg can critique Ebeling based on Ebeling's use of the "depth dimension" of human language to justify the concept of the "word of God." Pannenberg perceives in Ebeling's argument that human language may be inspired to the extent that every word and every language event is figured against the ground of this depth dimension of which Ebeling speaks. And once an argument is open to the old criticism of inspiration, it is open to a mythical understanding of words.

Pannenberg is able to distinguish Ebeling's understanding of word from the classical understanding of mythical word defined above, in that the classical definition sees every word as being divinely inspired alike. Pannenberg acknowledges that Ebeling understands only those words which "as the truth render a decision concerning [humanity]" to be the word of God. But he still

locates the problem with Ebeling's thesis that the human word may, by virtue of its capacity to give expression to truth and disclose that which is hidden, become the "word of God" in which God is revealed.

Pannenberg, however, maintains that "only that word may be called 'word of God' which announces the definitive future that is still hidden from every historical present" (1985:396). The definitive future is that which is defined by the resurrection of Christ. We know the promise the future holds because of the resurrection of Christ. Yet the future remains a promise which is veiled to each historical present moment, therefore we look continually to the future for the promise of God to be confirmed. Human speech is likened to the proclamation of Jesus regarding the commencement of the Kingdom of God. In the end it was the resurrection that made it clear God was in fact speaking through Jesus. Similarly, the truth of contemporary human speech that speaks of God may not be immediately known, but needs the confirmation of God's future reign.

It becomes clear that the place where Pannenberg and Ebeling part paths is with their respective views of time. For Pannenberg time is historical and chronological, and the future is the actualization and the consummation of the proleptically risen Christ. Therefore, the word of God is that which only confirms in time and history, and therefore in the future, what we know to be true proleptically in the resurrected Christ. As may be seen in the next section, Ebeling's view of time is quite different.

EBELING ANSWERS PANNENBERG

Whereas for Pannenberg time is historical and chronological, for Ebeling the critical time is the present. As was noted above, time is the constant source of language; language lives in time. The sentence, which is the basic unit of meaning in language, serves to place a subject in time. While the eventfulness of language takes place in the present time, the word which is spoken relates the past and the future to the present. Thus, in spite of the fleeting nature

of the present, the present through the spoken word can still relate us immediately to both past and future (Ebeling 1967:17f).

The capacity of human language to make present what no longer exists and what does not yet exist is not merely a nice side benefit of the ability to communicate with one another. Rather the capacity of human language to disclose “the presence of the hidden” is precisely what the “decisive function and power of language consists of.” Language has the function and the power to transcend the present moment relating us in a real way to both past and future, without which we would be imprisoned in the immediacy of our present environment (Ebeling 1971:54).

For Ebeling, “the necessity and power of human language is ultimately determined by the fact that the world is experienced as time” (Ebeling 1967:19). Each moment in life bears a narrative quality which implicitly involves past, present and future. But no matter where one lives, figuratively speaking, past, present or future, the critical modality of time which holds experience together is the present.

The past is experienced in the present as memory; the future is experienced in the present as expectation. It is living in the tensed modality of the present that allows us to embrace our whole experience. Therefore, the critical moment is now. Now is the decisive time when the past is remembered, the future is anticipated, and the tension between the two provides a crucial dramatic juncture in which the next episode in the narrative of our lives will be decided.¹

It is the temporal nature of the language event that points to the problem inherent in understanding language in terms of signification (words as signs merely pointing to concrete referents). The significatory function of language is rigid and inflexible to temporal considerations. The correction to this is to understand language in terms of “answerability” (1967:19).

Conceiving language in terms of answerability acknowledges that no one of us ever has the first or the last word. In addition to

¹ Cf. St. Augustine, *Confessions* (1961:XI:XIVff; esp. XI:XXVI.XXXVIII). I am also indebted here to Stephen Crites (1971:291-311).

the responsive nature of linguistic interaction on a daily basis, there was language before us to which we respond in learning to speak, and there will be language after us which responds to us. Our inability to be complete masters of the linguistic world by ourselves is evidence of the need for there to be one whose word will open up the truth and reality of existence to another in the present.

It is the task of this responsive word to shape humanity and to make humanity true. What is truth? Truth is a sound word and a healing word. Truth is reality set in words, and making known or disclosing the mystery of reality. This is not to reduce mystery to banalities, but to open up mystery as something which gives food not only for thought, but for faith, hope and love.

The criterion for truth is that which makes humanity free, and this freedom grants humanity a future. When one speaks to another in such a way that the other is freed, the future is opened up in terms of its possibilities. When in the present one knows the truth about the past and is freed to embrace the future, then one has entered the realm of what Ebeling is talking about when he says "God."

As noted above, Ebeling asserts that the very word "God" points to the basic situation of humanity as word situation. And just as the "depth dimension" present in the word "God" is the ground of the possibility of language against which the figure of any particular language event can occur, so also it can now be said that "God" is the mystery of reality. "God" is the name for that which surrounds humanity and which is outside and beyond humanity. "God" is the name of the mystery of reality which constitutes humanity's true situation as word situation (Ebeling 1967:31).

The most noble use of the word situation then is to present men and women to the person of God who is suggested by the very need to say the word "God." Though sometimes confusing, the distinction Ebeling makes between "God" (in quotes) and God (not in quotes), is between the word's unknown aspects as a linguistic symbol (the former), and its known aspects as a word which connotes a content (the latter). The question Ebeling raises is whether the

content which is designated as belonging to the word is necessarily consistent with the unknown aspects of the word as linguistic symbol which he seeks to explore in his theory of language.

The necessity of using the word "God" is definitive of its meaning; that is, the need to name that which is beyond ourselves gives definition to the word "God" as the mystery of reality. And yet as with all words, the meaning of the word "God" is also determined by the way it is used. It needs a verbal whole to determine its full meaning. According to Ebeling, this verbal whole is the "word of God." "In short, the word 'God' requires the word of God, as the word of God requires the word 'God'" (1967:33).

Ebeling is far from holding to any kind of mythicomagical idea of the word of God wherein the word is divinely inspired in a mythical or magical way. In fact, Ebeling maintains that according to the biblical tradition itself, the biblical word event, which is the word of God, does not go out of date but constantly renews itself in contemporary linguistic creativity (1967:40).

If it is true to the biblical tradition, the word event will reveal what was hidden, it will disclose truth, it will open up the world and present the mystery of reality. If the word event in any way presumes to exhaust the mystery, or constrains human freedom or shuts down the future, then this is not the word of God in the biblical tradition. "Tradition" itself is not the culprit for the biblical tradition is not wooden or dead. Rather, the biblical tradition is the kind "that sets us free for our own present" (1967:40).

The primary understanding and mode of time in which most people experience their existence is chronological time. Chronological time is the flow of time which we have structured into seconds, minutes, hours and days, and in which structure we live. And perhaps even more importantly, chronological time is that which marks the inevitable and invariable progression of one's life towards death. From the moment of birth, death is inexorably the *telos* of chronological time for the individual.

If the witness of the biblical tradition, in response to the God who redeems us and sets us free in Jesus Christ, is the kind that

sets us free for the *present*, then that view of time which is in concert with this intention is to be preferred.

To review briefly, Pannenberg offers a view of time which is historical and chronological, and the future is the actualization and the consummation of the proleptically risen Christ. Therefore, the word of God is that which only confirms in time and history, that is, in the future, what we know to be true proleptically in the resurrected Christ. Ebeling offers us a view of time in which the present is the critical modality of time holding together our entire experience, past, present and future.

It is my thesis that Ebeling's view of time, which emphasizes a fullness experienced in the present, is preferable to Pannenberg's for preaching. The biblical witness is that the redemption Christ won for us in his death and resurrection is available to humanity now. Ultimately Christ's victory over death, won when God raised up Jesus the Christ, spells the reversal of the ultimate consequence of chronological time—or, to put it another way—is the negation of the negation of death which is marked by chronological time.

Living in the hope of the resurrection is living in the promise of the future as Pannenberg maintains. Yet it is also living in the present faith that the world "*has been* changed by Jesus Christ" (present perfect tense). Not every change won by the resurrection of Christ is left to the future. New life, rebirth, forgiveness of sin, release from burden of guilt, healing and wholeness are gifts available to humanity today, not only tomorrow (Ebeling 1971:60f).

Establishing the possible unity of the divine word with the human word based upon this understanding of word in time does not mean that Ebeling is subscribing to a "mythical" understanding the way Pannenberg has defined myth (that is, a word in which the reality named makes itself present in such a way that it is immediately known). It may be said, however, that because of the call to continually renew the word of God through contemporary linguistic creativity, Ebeling is calling for a "remythologizing" of the word of God.² For the word of God must always be re-expressed in lin-

² T. F. Torrance (1969:61) points out that apart from the particularities of space and time which accompanied God's act of creating the universe, "nature would be

guistic forms which will enable contemporary people to interpret their lives through the mystery of reality which is disclosed to them.

There is no doubt that this discussion of "linguistics" raises the lively issue of verification of the word of God. While a full discussion of verification is outside the realm of this essay, it may be said that for Ebeling verification is not a matter of needing an outside factor to give confirmation that a particular word event is the word of God. And certainly a particular word event is not the word of God simply because it claims to be so. Rather, the word of God verifies itself. The word of God is self-authenticating. It does this in and of itself by verifying humanity. The word of God authenticates humanity. The word of God is verified, by means of a hermeneutical process, when it discloses that which is hidden and therefore, moves humanity closer to a truer identification of humanity.

To be more explicit, that word which opens up to men and women their basic situation, revealing the fact that what is true and what authenticates our humanity lies outside ourselves, that word which is presented "through a word of faith that testifies to love and thereby awakens hope" (Torrance 1969:61), that word is the self-authenticating word of God.

A RETURN TO THE QUESTION

We began by asking, "how is it that we can call the sermon the 'Word of God'?" The search has been for a way to affirm the third part of Barth's tripartite formula without resorting to the traditional notion of divine inspiration which, laying itself open to a

indeterminable and unintelligible, for it would have no sequences or patterns of change and no series of continuous coherent structures and would thus be incapable of any kind of meaningful formalization." Thus, in yet another response to Bultmann's program of "demythologizing," he concurs that "demythologizing" is impossible, since stripping away spatial and temporal ingredients from our theological concepts would lapse only into irrationality and meaninglessness. Without conscious awareness of it, our attempts at "demythologizing" can end only in "re-mythologizing" in the spatio-temporal structures and understandings of our time. See also Bultmann (1953).

“mythicomagical” interpretation, is inaccessible to most contemporary people and certainly the scholarly world of the human sciences.

I believe that Ebeling has put us on the right path to the answer to the question. His reliance on a linguistic analysis of the word event, and his attention to the temporal nature of experience and language has provided a framework in which we can take a new look at what it means to call the sermon the word of God.

Previously students of preaching have had several means of support to undergird the thesis that the sermon is the word of God. Biblical passages are often quoted. These passages include Isaiah 55:10f:

For as the rain and snow come down from heaven, and return not thither but water the earth . . . so shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose . . .

Romans 10:14:

But how are people to call upon him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without a preacher?

and I Corinthians 1:17-25:

For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel . . . For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God . . . For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe . . .

The prayer life of the preacher is often stressed by means of emphasizing how it is only through close communion with God that the preacher may know and therefore preach the Word of God. A strong theology of the Holy Spirit is another means of support for the thesis that the sermon may become the Word of God. Preachers pray to the end that the Holy Spirit may make the human word a divine word and create in the human heart a new place for the divine word to be born and received in a fresh way.

What we have said is not intended to invalidate these traditional ways for understanding the sermon as the Word of God. On the contrary, the intention is to give only a stronger foundation on which the more traditional ways of understanding the sermon as Word of God may be based.

Ebeling offers a way true to the biblical tradition because he reframes our understanding of the biblical tradition so it is not the words themselves that are the Word of God, but what the words are doing that makes them the Word of God. When a word event, such as a sermon, is formed in such a way that it discloses some of the mystery of reality, that it speaks a word of truth, that it is freeing for men and women, opens up the future and allows the future to be embraced, and all of this in the critical, decisive moment of *now*, then this word event may become the Word of God.

Notice that this definition of Word of God is void of Christological content or strict biblical reference. That must be filled in by the preacher and verified through a hermeneutical process. But no matter how correct the words sound, if the words do not *do* the above (set people free, open up the future, etc.), they are not the Word of God.

In the end Pannenberg draws a sharp contrast between “Christian speech” and the divine word. Since even the words of Jesus needed the confirmation of history to constitute them as having divine authority, then the divine word which is the “content” of Christian speech may not be immediately known. This future-oriented time frame leaves the preacher in a very tentative position, questioning the extent to which any preached word may be heard

as the "Word of God." The sense is one of the jury being out for an indeterminate length of time.

In this respect Ebeling's view of time is far superior to Pannenberg's for the purposes of preaching because it is more consistent with the biblical tradition. The scriptures speak of the Word becoming incarnate in the "fullness of time" (Gal 4:4). When the Word became incarnate he was "full of grace and truth . . . and from his fullness have we all received . . ." (John 1:14-16).

For Pannenberg to speak of the "content" of Christian speech as some entity apart from and distinct from the divine word is to create a chasm between the two which can only be bridged by words serving a significative function and pointing to a divine word which cannot really be known in the present. It would be more true to the biblical tradition to affirm that the divine can be known fully now, in the present. ". . . Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known" (John 1:17b.18).

Inasmuch as this author prefers Ebeling's view of time for the purposes of preaching, however, it must also be said that neither view can exist solely without the other. For the Ebeling-Pannenberg debate regarding how time should be viewed may be summarized in the following way: Since the coming of Jesus Christ, the Christian Church has been able to say, "the Kingdom of God is here"—but until the second coming of Christ when the Kingdom will be fully consummated, it remains necessary to add ". . . but not yet."

Ebeling's emphasis is clearly on the first of the two step statement. Pannenberg's emphasis is clearly on the second step. For Ebeling the word of God may be self-authenticating today because Christ has come and initiated the Kingdom in the fullness of time. For Pannenberg even the words of Jesus were not verified until God raised up Jesus from the dead. Therefore, our words will also need the kind of verification that lies ahead only in the future.

Coming to grips with how one understands both steps of the formula is essential for the preacher. When one climbs into the pulpit week after week and looks out upon those for whom the

“not yet” carries painfully harsh realities, the preacher must have a way of dealing with the “not yet.”

One must finally ask, what difference does all this make? What difference does it make if one holds to Ebeling’s view of time or Pannenberg’s view of time? What difference does it make if your homiletical foot comes down heavily on the first step or on the second?

It makes a difference in noting that if the nature of God’s Word is that it opens up life for people today, if it does in fact open up the eschatological presence of God in contemporary life, then we are remiss not to proclaim that presence. If the nature of God’s Word, however, is that it reveals a set of possibilities for tomorrow in hope of which I may live today, we would be cruel to suggest it does more.

Fundamentally, most preachers probably have some confidence the Word of God does both. But it would be interesting for preachers to ask themselves what view of “time” they assume in their preaching, and if different kinds of preaching lend themselves to different views of “time.”

As the preacher matures, the unbridled zeal of early call and new ordination is tempered by the stark reality of death remaining as the last enemy to be conquered. Conviction deepens as the community of God experiences the faithfulness of God, who is “like a mother who will not abandon the child in her arms, and like a father who runs to welcome the prodigal home” (PC [USA]:1988). But humility is conviction’s companion as both preacher and community await confirmation like a child who returns home from school early—before Mother—knows that she will soon be there. In this confidence and in this hope, the preacher may proclaim the Kingdom of God which is here . . . but not yet.

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Like Dreamers Lying in Wait, We Lament:

A New Reading of Psalm 126

SCOTT R. A. STARBUCK

IN A DARK TIME THE EYE BEGINS TO SEE

One of Theodore Roethke's poems begins with the line "In a dark time, the eye begins to see" (Roethke 1929:2272). This poem is as powerful in speaking to one searching for contentment as it is provocative to those who believe they have found it. Yet, though the poem as a whole is profound, the initial line, "In a dark time, the eye begins to see," is often excised and appropriated on its own terms. Recently I ran into such a case in the transcript of an interview that Bill Moyers had with Joseph Campbell. Speaking about the vitality of myth, Campbell remarked:

One thing that comes out in myths, for example, is that at the bottom of the abyss comes the voice of salvation. The black moment is the moment when the real message of transformation is going to come. At the darkest moment comes the light. (Campbell 1988:39)

And Moyers responded, "like Roethke's poem, 'In a Dark Time, the Eye Begins to See' " (ibid.).

I too, would like to excise this initial poetic line of Roethke and offer it as a metaphorical bridge between an ancient poem of the Hebrew people and the modern community of faith. It will be argued in this paper that the poem under discussion, Psalm 126,

is best typified as a Lament of the People.¹ Though it is only six verses long, both the black moment at the bottom of the abyss as well as the light from within the abyss were cradled in this psalm by the ancient Israelite community. And although the psalm speaks of things which have been far removed from our modern lives—Zion, wadis in the Negeb, and perhaps even sowing and reaping—this psalm is truly a “gem”² of the psalter.

Significantly, in Psalm 126 the ones who are in a dark time and whose eyes begin to see are likened to dreamers (היינו כחלמים). As one might suspect, this mention of dreaming has long been a crux for the interpretation of the psalm. Before discussing this in detail, it will be helpful to consider the psalm as a whole.

Composed of five units, the psalm exhibits a syllable count which emphasizes the twofold confession of YHWH's faithfulness in verses 2d and 3a. Though structurally unified, there appears to be a thematic discrepancy between section I which rejoices over YHWH's act of restoration and section III which implores God to restore. Verse 3a of section II fits nicely with the first section, while 3b's claim that “we are rejoicers” seems to clash with the imperative plea of the following section. Sections IV and V suggest hope within despair—a note appropriate to section III but not to sections I and II. To complicate things further, the two existential confessions, “we are like dreamers” and “we are rejoicers,” reveal the emotional state of the community in a way that is parenthetical to the primary movement of the psalm. Further, the problem of verbal tenses throws additional curves into the already complex exegetical labyrinth presented by this psalm. But interpretive puzzles of this kind beg to be solved upon the assumption that at some point in time the psalm's sense was less enigmatic. This is not to say that the syntax of poetry is always straightforward and obvious.

¹ According to C. Westermann (1981:70), the Lament of the People usually includes an Address, a Lament, a Turning toward God (confession of trust), a Petition, and a Vow of praise.

² So Weiser (1969:760) writes: “The psalm is like a precious stone in a simple and yet worthy setting. The gentle spirit of a heartfelt and trusting hope based on faith pervades the whole psalm; and from this very trustfulness springs the strength of true piety.”

³ Based on the occurrence of *šybt* in III.24 of Eighth B.C.E. Seffire Inscription: *hšbw lhn šybt . . .* “the gods restored the fortunes . . .” (Gibson 1975:50), there is no longer any reason to amend *שיבת* (cf. Kraus 1972:853: “*שיבת* ist offensichtlich ein Schreibfehler.”) Given the internal *mater lectionis* it is clear that *šybt* is to be derived from **šwb* “to return.” Thus the idea of restoration is indicated by *šwb* and its cognate accusative (cf. Charles and Hoftijzer 1965:296; Fitzmyer 1958:463f).

⁴ The following syllable count is evidenced assuming one beat for segolates.

⁵ In both 1b and 4a I have translated *שיבת* and *שבות* as “destiny” instead of “fortune” since the “turning” of Zion is not primarily a guarantee of wealth but the reestablishment of the future of a people both with YHWH and relative to the world. In the MT *שוב שבות* became a *terminus technicus* in the Israelite cult. In the passages where *שוב שבות* occurs the refurbishment of the land is often mentioned: “O Lord, you have favored your land, restore Jacob’s fortunes” Ps 85:2; “. . . when the mountains shall drip wine and all the hills shall wave [with grain], I will restore my people Israel” Amos 9:14; “On these [pastures] they shall graze [their flocks] . . . for the Lord their God will take note of them and restore their fortunes” Zeph 2:7. Consistently in the MT a thematic bridge exists between the restoration of the destiny of Israel and the refurbishment of the land.

⁶ The content of the vision which is recounted by ones likened to dreamers is in bold-face. See below.

⁷ I have read the *Kētīb* *שבותנו* although it is simply an alternate form with the *Qērē* *שביתנו* (cf. Borger 1954:315f). The standard lexicon of Brown, Driver, and Briggs (1906:986) lists *שבות* and *שבית* under the verbal root *שבה* “to take captive.” The lexicon defines *שבות* as specifically referring to “captivity” and generally connoting “fortunes.” The latter sense is to be preferred here given the parallelism with *שיבת* in 1b.

⁸ Verse six, which exhibits a 7-6||6-7 count appears to be a parabolic saying which was added to the short psalm. Once introduced, it throws off the symmetry of 2d and 3a (each exhibiting a 10 count) with the rest of the psalm.

⁹ *משך* is listed in Brown, Driver, and Briggs (1906) as “a drawing, a drawing up, a trail,” from *משך* (to draw, drag). It is difficult to imagine how a person would physically bear a trail of seed. The LXX is of no help since it has translated the phrase *הזרע המשך* as τὰ σπέρματα αὐτῶν “their seeds.” There is no reason to adopt the LXX reading since the same consonantal text is evidenced by 11QPs(a). Moreover, with *משך* verse 6 evidences a perfect 7-6||7-6 syllable count (cf. previous note). H. Bardtke in *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* suggests that *משך* be read as a participle: “That which strews,” or “the strewer.” Likewise, after comparing this verse to Amos 9:13 (*במשך הזרע*), Dahood (1970:221) has concluded that “*משך* is the semantic equivalent of *mōšēk*, “the strewer.” He cites as further evidence the Imperial Aramaic *mšk* which means “skin, leather”: hence a leather pouch. One might add that Ibn Ezra understood *משך* to mean skin (cf. Keet 1969:54). It seems best, then, to understand *משך* to be the seed bag the sower would carry.

On the contrary, in the words of R. Alter, poetry, “working through a system of complex linkages of sound, image, word, rhythm, syntax, theme, idea, is an instrument for conveying densely patterned meaning, and sometimes contradictory meanings . . .” (1985:13). Yet Alter continues on to mentioning the

“minute, multiple, heterogeneous, and semantically fruitful inter-connections” of poetry “in which the reader luxuriates.” It is with this spirit of clarification and discovery that the following exegetical comments are made.

Beginning with the problem of verbal tenses, it is both helpful and perplexing to note that commentators have understood **הָיִינוּ** to indicate either a past existence, a present state of being, or a hoped for future status.¹⁰ Recently Alan M. Harman reargued the majority opinion—that **הָיִינוּ** in verse 1c in conjunction with the temporal infinitive **בְּשׁוּב** should be understood to indicate past existence noting that “if present time was intended the pronoun plus the participle would have been more appropriate” (Harman 1985:78).

Contrary to Harman, other viable options present themselves. Whereas the preposition **בְּ** plus the infinitive construct with **וַיְהִי** is indicative of past action, the temporal infinitive **בְּשׁוּב** alone simply means “in (YHWH’s) turning” irrespective of time (cf. Gesenius 1910:347f). Thus, **בְּשׁוּב** could refer to past, present, or future action. Second, the Perfect **הָיָה** with the preposition **בְּ** can be translated either as “were like” or “are like” depending on its context.¹¹ Moreover, **הָיִינוּ** in verse 3 can easily be understood to indicate stative action or experiential action rather than completed action (cf. Williams 1976:29f). In short, neither the temporal infinitive **בְּשׁוּב** nor the idiomatic **בְּ הָיִינוּ** is restricted to past rather than present action.

The same ambiguity with relation to verbal tense is present in 2a and 2c. Since **אֶזְרָא** with an imperfect is used much like the participle to express single unfinished or enduring actions in the past or present (Davidson 1985:68), **אֶזְרָא יִמְלֵא** and **יִאמְרוּ** indicate enduring action which takes place within the same time-frame as **הָיִינוּ**. Therefore, in section I there are simply no syntactical clues

¹⁰ *Past*: Schmidt (1934:226); Kissane (1964:578); Dahood (1970:217); Kraus (1972:853); Allen (1983:169). *Present*: Weiser (1969:159); Beyerlin (1978:22f). *Future*: Gunkel (1966:551); Duhm (1899/ ²1922:274); Michel (1960:243).

¹¹ For example, in the following cases the RSV translates this idiom with a present force: Jer 23:9; Is 47:14; Pss 88:5, 102:7, 119:83; and Hos 7:16. Cf. Gen 20:2, 28:16, 31:24; Job 7:13f, 33:15f; Is 29:7f, etc.

from which the temporal reference of the verses can be discerned. Lacking grammatical clarification, the import of כְּחֹלְמִים becomes paramount for interpretation.

Indeed, the crux of interpretation for this psalm is the phrase הָיִינוּ כְּחֹלְמִים “we were/are like dreamers.” For starters, the ancient versions differ substantially in their rendering of חֹלְמִים. The LXX translated חֹלְמִים with παρακεκλημένοι “ones comforted” (Rahlfs 1935).¹² The Targum interpreted כְּחֹלְמִים as הֵיךְ מֵרַעִיא דְאִיתְסִיין “like sick people who are cured.”¹³ Like the LXX and the Targum, the Qumran sect also understood חֹלְמִים to be passive and recorded כְּחֹלְמוֹמִים.¹⁴ It would appear that each of these translations have understood the participle חֹלְמִים to be derived from *hlm* I “to be healthy, strong” (Strugnell 1956:241f). Although this sense of *hlm* I is common in Aramaic and Syriac (ibid.), it is strange to Classical Hebrew occurring only three times.¹⁵ Perhaps the most radical ancient interpretive effort is represented in the Syriac Old Testament. Ignoring חֹלְמִים completely and taking 1c to be parallel with 3b, the Peshitta reads *hwyn 'yk hnwn dhdyn* “as those who rejoice” (Peshitta Institute 1980). Equally radical is the modern interpretive attempt of M. Dahood to divide the consonantal text to read כְּחֹל מִים (as sand of the waters), or as כְּהֹלָם ים (as sand of the sea) with an enclitic *mêm* (1970:218f). The problem with which each of these versions has wrestled is not inherent with *hlm* II “to dream,” the normal rendering of חֹלְמִים, but with the discrepancy between the reporting of YHWH’s restoration and the community’s self identification as dreamers. Apparently, sometime in the post-exilic period the connection between verse 1b and כְּחֹלְמִים of 1c became nonsensical.

¹² Cf. also Is 38:16 where תְּחִלְמִינִי is rendered as παρακληθείς.

¹³ Cf. Techen (1896:45). Note, however, that the Sephardic tradition reads הֵיךְ מֵרַעִיא דְמִתְעַרִין מִחֲמִיהוֹן “like sleepers who awaken from their dreams” (de Zamora 1982:178).

¹⁴ Cf. Sanders (1965). The text probably indicates a passive participle. It is easier to understand *hlm* II “to be healthy, strong” in a passive sense than *hlm* I “to dream.” Thus, some translation like “having been healed” is assumed. It is possible, though less likely, that the internal *wāw* is used for the Tiberian *shēwā*’ (cf. Qimran 1986:17).

¹⁵ Job 39:4, Is 38:16, and with the nominal חֹלְמִים of Zech 6:14.

In 1978 Walter Beyerlin presented a new reading of this psalm,¹⁶ a reading that hinged on an understanding of כְּחֹלְמִים which had been surprisingly missing from ancient and modern interpretations of the psalm,¹⁷ but which was well grounded in the Ancient Near East.

First, Beyerlin pointed out that modern commentators missed what would have been the obvious meaning of this verse for the ancient Hebrew by unwittingly assuming a modern preunderstanding of “dream.” According to the ancient Semitic metaphysic, dreams always and only occurred while a person slept.¹⁸ Beyerlin thought this to be fundamentally important since both the modern German and English usages of “Traum - dream” allow several meanings that are not strictly related to a sleeping dream.¹⁹ If חֹלְמִים could only refer to people who are dreaming while asleep, it becomes obvious why the preposition כְּ was required: the psalmist’s community was not *actually* sleeping, but only sharing a like experience with people who dream during sleep.

Second, Beyerlin raised the question whether the state of dreaming described in 1c could represent self-deception (as in the case of Ps 73:20 and Isa 29:7). Answering no, he concluded that such a reading of the text would indicate that Zion had deceived itself which, within the context of the psalm, is impossible.²⁰ Therefore, the only option left open for the exegete to deduce is that חֹלְמִים had the positive valuation of a sleeping

¹⁶ The references below are taken from the English edition (1982).

¹⁷ Cf. Beyerlin’s rehearsal of modern interpretative attempts (1982:10-14).

¹⁸ Beyerlin has based this observation upon the findings of two studies in particular: Ehrlich (1953), and Oppenheim (1956:179-373).

¹⁹ For example, *Random House College Dictionary* (1980) lists eight meanings of the noun “dream” and eight definitions of the verb. Only three definitions of the noun and two definitions of the verb are concerned with activity restricted to a sleeping state. For the modern German understanding of dreaming cf. Beyerlin (1982:15f).

²⁰ “There is no question at all that the psalm writer could have meant this. No exegete has ever interpreted the passage this way . . . thus—we must repeat—anyone who interprets the passage in this way, not only introduces thoughts that are nowhere in the text, but also refers, by introducing this fear, to a process in the waking state . . . which is anachronistic from a linguistic-historical point of view” (Beyerlin 1982:19). However, it is important to note that there are other possibilities for a negative evaluation of “as dreamers” which Beyerlin does not discuss. Cf. the suggestion offered below.

dream (Beyerlin 1982:20f). This meant that the dreamer would have been firmly convinced of the reality which he or she dreamed. After citing the biblical precedent for such dreaming (ibid.), Beyerlin suggested that the key insight into the interpretation of the text had been gained and that the true meaning of the psalm verse followed, “as if of its own accord” (1982:22).

The restoration of Zion is in the future . . . The community of Zion expressly compares itself to dreamers who perceive through God’s will the still hidden reality: ‘we are like dreamers’ meaning: like dreamers we see Jahweh restoring Zion, we already know that then our mouth will be filled with laughter and our tongue with shouts of joy. . . . Because of this advance experience, our present state looks quite different to us. (ibid.)

Understood this way, the psalm would refer to both the present and the future. The psalmist’s community perceived the future intentions of God like dreamers and, assured of its impending actualization, proclaimed their eagerly anticipated joy. But since the restoration—the content of the vision—remained to be actualized, the petition of verse 4 appropriately followed the proclamation of the vision, encouraging deity to fulfill the divine intent. The last two verses describe with metaphor the restoration promised by dream to the suffering community.

Beyerlin’s proposed interpretation marks a decisive advance in the exegesis of Psalm 126. Building upon Beyerlin’s work, I would like to suggest a differently nuanced interpretation.

Beyerlin handled the issue of a negative valuation of dreaming by demonstrating the incongruity of any idea of deception inherent in the psalm. This is to say that the community neither deceived itself nor was deceived by an inappropriate or idle dream (cf. note 20). “Like dreamers” does not mean that the vision of restoration put forth in section I amounted only to something like a bad or fluttering dream which vanishes into thin air upon waking.

Thus, Beyerlin concluded that the existential confession “like dreamers” was essentially a positive designation.

What Beyerlin did not consider was whether the self-pronouncement which characterizes the community as dreamers could itself be indicative of a negative standing of the community itself and as such the reason for the petition in verse 4. Beyerlin understood the first section of the psalm (the vision of the community) as if *it* were likened to a dream. However, it is the *community* itself which is the focus of the simile.²¹ It is one thing to have a vision like a dream and quite another to be likened to a dreamer.

There are only five substantive uses of the participle of חלם in the MT,²² and excepting the text under discussion, each use carries a negative connotation. Three times dreamers are mentioned in Dt 13 with reference to prophecy. This chapter renders a verdict against any dreamer of dreams who would lead the people of Israel astray: that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death. In Jer 27:9 dreamers are listed along with prophets (נְבִיאִים), diviners (קְסָמִים), soothsayers (עֲנָנִים), and sorcerers (כַּשְׁפִּים) who often claim to purport God’s will but who actually deceive the gullible who listen. It is true that sometimes God would reveal a *bona fide* vision to a prophet through a dream (Num 12:6, 1Sam 28:15). However, often professional prophets would lie claiming to have received such a vision (Jer 23:25). Thus, the problem posed by dreamers was a problem of the proper discernment of the will of God.

Although it is possible that the reference to “like dreamers” in Psalm 126 could point to a community which has fallen under suspicion and judgment similar to the “dreamers” mentioned above, there are no indications within the psalm—such as the ridicule of others—that this is the case. If the specific office of “dreamer” is

²¹ A similar observation was made by Harman (1985:77): “The major difficulty with his view is simply that the text here says not they ‘were dreamers’ but ‘like dreamers.’” In deference to Harman, it is not the simile that presents problems to Beyerlin’s thesis but rather the focus of the simile (i.e. on the community and not on the vision).

²² The one predicate use of the participle occurs in Gen 41:1.

not indicated by כְּחִלְמִים, then it is probable that a state of being which is likened to dreaming is purported.

Just as it is instructive to examine “dreamers” in the Hebrew bible, it is equally important to note the use of dream language in similes. Dreams function as similes four times in the MT: Is 29:7, Job 20:8, Ps 73:20, and Ps 126:1. Leaving Ps 126:1 aside, each of the remaining three occurrences speak of dreaming as a negative, elusive experience. The first, Is 29:7, likens the multitude of nations which fight against Mount Zion to a dream which during sleep appears to be real but upon waking proves impotent. According to this text, the armies may appear as a multitude, but at the wrath of YHWH they will flutter away like a dream. Essentially the same simile is found in Job 20:8: in the end, death extinguishes a human being much like a dream is extinguished upon waking. And in a like manner, Ps 73:20 compares the eventual demise and disappearance of the wicked to phantoms of a nightmare which disappear when one wakes up.

It might seem that each of these texts claim that anything which is like a dream is to be considered less than real. However, in a recent article Thorkild Jacobsen (1987) argued against such an understanding while discussing the metaphysics of the ancients. After calling attention to the dualism of the modern metaphysic which distinguishes cleanly between what *is* and what *is not*, Jacobsen suggested that the opposite was the case for the ancients.

As to what is real, our main criterion is that of coherence. A dream may be extremely vivid and the dream experience may seem very real; yet if, on awakening we find that it stands in no causal connection with the stream of experience before we went to sleep, we dismiss it as unreal, it was a dream merely. For the ancients there was no such dismissal. Their world was one, they were *monists*. They too distinguished between experience when awake and dreams, but to them the differ-

ence was not, as for us, one of kind, that is, real or unreal, but one of degree. Both kinds of experience were real, but not in the same degree, not of the same staying power. (1987:18f)

Dreams represented potential reality. The monist metaphysic believed that a dream could often be an initial sign of what was gradually becoming more and more lasting, solid, and to a modern dualist, real. Considering this, what are we to make of the references cited above to the fleeting character of dreams?

The answer to this question is also the shared commonality between the two elements employed in the similes. The dreams, like the enemies, wicked, or humankind, are real—but not as real or with the same staying power as the experiences of a person upon waking. This is not to say that the dreams mentioned above would have been considered intentionally שָׁקֵר “false,” as in the case of the deceptive claims of some dreamers (cf. Jer 23:32 and Zech 10:2). Instead, they were simply fleeting, transient, ephemeral.²³

The possibility that all dreams fell in a continuum between fleeting and actualized gives us some indication of what it was like to receive dreams within the world-view of the ancient Near East. When a person dreamt a good dream he or she would wait with hopeful anticipation for its actualization—hoping that the vision would not turn out to be fleeting. And the converse was also true. A nightmare was certain to provoke fear until it was determined that the dream was fleeting and not moving toward permanence. Thus it is reasonable to assume that waiting upon dreams created a certain amount of anxiety in the dreamer—anxiety caused by the trepidation that a bad dream would be actualized and that a good dream would not. Moreover, the dreamer had little control over

²³ Likewise, referring to the east Semitic mind-set, Jacobsen (1987:19) writes: “Anything established its existence by coming to one’s awareness, but some things were fleeting only and did not stand up under closer examination. They were *sarr* (‘fleeting,’ ‘momentary,’ ‘insubstantial,’ ‘false,’ ‘lies’). Others held up, were durable, *kênu* (‘firm,’ ‘lasting,’ ‘true’) . . .”

the eventual nature of the vision. It is not surprising, then, to find the following petitions in an Akkadian psalm: "Send me that I may see a favourable dream. The dream I see, may it be favourable. The dream I see, may it come true. The dream I see, turn into favour" (Langdon 1923:15.21ff).

Added to this anxiety is the dictum of the proverbial Qohelet which claims that dreams can be the product of an uneasy mind²⁴ (4:3) and their interpretation or retelling produces empty words (4:7). Not only does dreaming produce anxiety, but apparently anxiety was thought to encourage bad dreaming.²⁵

If the above assumptions about dreaming are accurate, then the complaint which is put forth by the community in its lament in Psalm 126 is that, like dreamers, they await the actualization of their vision of restoration hoping that their vision will not prove to be fleeting. Just as the Akkadian psalm quoted above asks for the dream to come true, the community of Psalm 126 petitions for the realization of their vision. Since the restoration of Zion lies concretely in the past and, hopefully, ephemerally in the present, the community laments its condition of waiting and petitions God for swift action which will reverse the present ill fortune. This reading of the psalm differs from Beyerlin's in that it considers the existential confession "like dreamers" to be the *ground* of the complaint and not primarily a reason for hope. Thus, the anxiety which a dreamer experiences while awaiting the eventual outcome of a dream experience is the same type of heartache that the psalmist's community experiences—the same heartache, by the way, that a farmer experiences when sowing seed since there is no way to know whether the seed will blossom or simply disappear in the soil.

²⁴ This perspective on the state of dreaming is echoed in the following Akkadian text: "Remove [woe] anxiety from your heart (literally: from your side), [woe] and anxiety create (only bad) dreams" (quoted from Oppenheim 1956:227).

²⁵ It is important to note that this is only a minority opinion. So much so that Oppenheim remarks that "the scarcity of such allusions, however, is in itself revealing" (1956:227). The majority opinion is that dreams originate not with the dreamer but with supernatural forces such as gods or spirits (cf. Oppenheim 1956:229f).

It is precisely this meaning of “like dreamers” that I would like to suggest is connoted by כְּחֹלְמִים in Psalm 126.

THE INTERRELATIONSHIPS OF THE POEM

With the issue of the relationship of verse 1b to 1c as well as the logical transition between section I and section II settled, the rest of the psalm's structure unfolds without much exegetical strain. The remainder of the first section is comprised of two cola (verses 2a-b and 2c-d) which utilize וְ and an imperfect exhibiting anaphora. This serves to bind the two cola together as the continuation of the same thought: namely that the restoration of the destiny of Zion will be accompanied by emotions of joy (2a) and the realization among the heathen nations that YHWH has done great works with this community. The two are inseparable results of YHWH's restoration. The deliberate structuring of the psalmists's hand is evident in the use of chiasmus (laughter—mouths/tongues—joy) which allows the rhythmic anticipation of joy to come.

A type of anaphora is again implemented by the psalmist as the spoken realization of the heathen nations (2d) is repeated in 3a, but this time as the confession of the community itself. Significantly, the use of הִגְדִּיל “he did greatly” grounds the content of the proclamation within the *Heilsgeschichte*, “salvation history.” R. Mosis has argued that “from a traditio-historical point of view, the statements concerning the greatness of God in the OT come from two completely different spheres” (1975:406). According to Mosis the two spheres are the Zion Tradition and History (*Heilsgeschichte*). Though Psalm 126 mentions Zion and calls to mind the Zion tradition, and though the two spheres can not be considered exclusive of each other, the significance of הִגְדִּיל is not so much that YHWH is the great one over all the nations (Zion Tradition) but rather that YHWH effectively brings deliverance to the chosen people.²⁶ The visioned hope that the nations will realize YHWH's

²⁶ So Mosis (1975:411) writes: “This verbal form of speaking of Yahweh's greatness, which comes from Israel's believing historical experience, does not attribute to Yahweh a place in the structure of the universe of gods and men [sic!], but speaks of his incomparable activeness and efficaciousness in history.”

greatness is founded upon the community's own realization of this fact. Being the two longest verses of the psalm as well as its center, it is clear that the poet desires these two confessions of 2d and 3a, one actual and one potential, to be the solid and steady theme of the psalm. It is a theme in which the first half of the poem finds its culmination and a theme from which the second half issues.

Not only does the second section of the psalm build upon verse 2d, verse 3b forms an *inclusio* with 1c. But now, instead of being like dreamers who wait upon YHWH's future action, the recounting of the *Heilsgeschichte* effects a new state of being within the community. Anticipation is replaced by jubilation—jubilation that is founded upon the good work of God in the past. Thus, the movement of the first half of the psalm is both an unfolding of 1b (בשוב יהוה את שיבת ציון) and an unfolding of the community's emotional temper in relation to the anticipated restoration. As the community proclaims aloud its vision of YHWH's restoring action, its members are transformed from a state of nagging anticipation like one who dreams to an emotional state of rejoicing of ones who have seen the realization of a dream come into being.

The third section of the psalm begins with phraseology similar to the opening of the first section. However, there are two important differences. Where the first half begins with the recounting of a restoration by YHWH (inf. const. + בָּ), the second half begins with an imperative. Second, the variant form of שיבת is used (שבות) in verse 4. Both of these differences serve to highlight a division or turning within the psalm: from anticipatory proclamation to petition. At the same time the similarity of language and word order recalls what was introduced in the first section: the restoration of Zion's destiny.

The fourth section is ordered by an internal chiasmus (sowers—in tears/in joy—will reap) similar to 2ab. These poetic devices bind together the two sections into a structural unity where the vow of confidence of the fourth section echoes the movement of anticipatory proclamation in the first section. The units are further related by the occurrence of רנה, in the first section, the fourth section and the added fifth section. Where in sections IV and V

הנה is used to describe the joy that comes from a successful harvest, in the first section it refers to the restoration of Zion. Significant for an agricultural society, the poet has intentionally compared the restoration of Zion to the restoration that a farmer experiences when seemingly dead seeds blossom into an abundant harvest.

The last section of the psalm appears to be a parable which functions as a further explication of verse 5. It is written in antithetical parallelism which emphasizes the two extreme emotions that are part of the farmer's life. In both verses 5 and 6 the counterpart of joy is misery that comes with a fearful expectation that the crop planted will perish because of drought, be eaten by locust, or be destroyed by wind and heat. Yet, the movement in these verses is the movement of *reversal*: tears and anguished cries will turn to joy. Thus, verses 5-6 serve as an assurance that the petition has been heard by YHWH and restoration will happen in season.

It is not without significance that Psalm 126 is alluded to by Luke when he reports Jesus' Sermon on the Plain. This third beatitude of Luke's hand corresponds to Matthew's second: "Blessed are those who mourn for they will be consoled." Matthew's rendering brings to mind the community that mourned for Zion in Is 61:2. Both Matthew and Luke express, with the help of allusions to the Old Testament, that the Kingdom of God is a Kingdom of *reversal*. The antithetical movement between weeping and joyous cries in Psalm 126 is the same radical movement that characterizes the Kingdom of God. The people who are afflicted—the poor, the hungry, the ones weeping, the outlaws—can expect radical transformation in the great deeds of YHWH.

Having explicated the interrelationships within and between the five sections of Psalm 126, we may note that the psalm consists of a lament (1c),²⁷ a confession of trust (3a), a petition (4a), and perhaps a vow of praise (sections IV and V).²⁸ Though replacing the

²⁷ According to Westermann's (1981) typology. Cf. note 1.

²⁸ Westermann (1980:43) notes in another study that the Vow of Praise is usually absent in a Lament of the People. However, given the twofold emphasis on the reversal from weeping to rejoicing which is predicated on YHWH's act of restora-

normal address to God with the announcement of the community's vision, Psalm 126 best fits the form of Lament of the People.

IN A DARK TIME THE EYE BEGINS TO SEE

By returning to our hermeneutical metaphor, "in a dark time, the eye begins to see," I would like to suggest that Psalm 126 can be read with new theological clarity.

What is the community's dark time? P. D. Miller (1986) has recently stressed that the language of the psalms is open and metaphorical. The recognition of this fact, he writes, "is one of the most important hermeneutical clues to the interpretation of the psalms" (1986:51). This is indeed the case for Psalm 126. Just as drought robs the land of life-giving potential, the people of Israel found themselves cast into a multitude of arid situations which threatened to still the very spark of life which sustained them. It is this type of situation that Psalm 126 presupposes.²⁹ The community needs restoration, and if the parallel holds, is planting the seeds of restoration with its tears. Just like the farmer, the community has no way of knowing whether or not the seemingly dead seeds will ever grow into a crop that could be harvested. Thus, the restoration for which the community hopes cannot be brought to fruition by the community alone. Its part is to plant the seeds of restoration and tend the crop. It can simply hope that YHWH will nourish the crop with life-giving rain. The only assurance available is grounded in the community's trust in its God. In verse 4 the hoped for restoration is likened to the stream beds of the Negeb. These springs and wells are essential for habitation in an area where rainfall varies yearly and droughts are common. Not only do the

tion and general faithfulness, the last two sections of the psalm could be understood to institute a Vow of Praise.

²⁹ A precise dating of the psalm cannot be established. The rehabilitation language that is used in verse 1 and 4 occurs in literature dated before, during, and after the exile (cf. note 5). *Dm'* which was once thought to be a late borrowing from Aramaic is well attested in the Ugaritic texts. Beyerlin (1982:34f) has demonstrated that Psalm 126 shares many affinities with the Book of Joel which was probably written between 445 and 300 BCE (cf. Wolff 1977:5). However, the linguistic parallels cited by Beyerlin (1982) may indicate a dependence of Joel upon the Psalm 126 and not *vice versa*.

stream beds represent the life giving force in the region (cf. Ahroni 1967:26), they are indicative of a sudden change from drought to whirling torrents—a swift transformation from death to life. Psalm 126 can function as an anticipatory petition whenever a believing community is confronted by the loss of their future, the ridicule of outside groups, or the grip of death from lack of sustenance.

If it is safe to assume that the occasion of this psalm is indicative of a dark time, then the vision which the community offers to one another, like a dreamer offers the vision of the night, is indeed an indication that the eye begins to see in such a dark time. In other words, the fact that the community likens itself to dreamers who see visions can function as an encouragement to dare any community of faith to catch the vision of God. Since the “dreamer” language of the psalm is used figuratively, there is no explicit theological doctrine of dreaming to be found in this psalm. The corporate seeing of the community from within its dark time is not characterized by enigmas or phantasmic images which are often the substance of dreams and require trained interpretation. Instead, the simple and yet profound image of YHWH’s salvific restoration is described not by explicit events but by its anticipated effects. Moreover, the community’s vision is founded upon the past saving work of YHWH, the *Heilsgeschichte*. Thus the theological import of verse 1c is that the community’s vision is grounded upon YHWH’s own self-disclosure as the Lord of history and nature. It is for this reason alone that the community dares to pray the imperative prayer.

Even though the eye begins to see in the dark time, the dark does not disappear swiftly. There is still weeping while sowing. Hard labor continues while hoping for profit. The vision of restoration remains to be realized, and like dreamers awaiting the end of their vision, the community in its anxiety calls out to God. To many outside the community of faith, the vision must seem to be only the product of those dreamers of dreams. Thus, the confession of YHWH’s greatness is enveloped by the ridicule of anticipation and the pain of hope.

This psalm of lamentation resonates with all who long for the Kingdom of God on earth, the justice of God to be established among the nations, and the love of God to be realized within human relationships—the visions that the eye most clearly sees in the darkness of despair and the nights of longing. The vision of Psalm 126 is a vision founded upon the faithful work of God. It is an open vision which encourages the modern believer to look boldly for the restoration of God in the depth of the bottom of the abyss—and when awaiting its realization, to implore that the vision be made manifest in the concreteness of everyday life. It is a poem that encourages the suspension of any strict ontological dualism which renders prayer as simple imagination and visions as hopeful consolation. And, though Zion and the Negeb are far from us, our own communities of faith and occupation cry out for restoration daily and thus share solidarity with the ancient community in which this psalm was first voiced.

Being such, we can lay claim to Psalm 126 as the ancients did. Psalm 126 is our poem as well. It is a poem which dares us to catch the vision of God when God's plan and purpose seems distant from our present reality. It is a poem that roots our longings within the trajectory of the *Heilsgeschichte*. It is a poem which, like the Lord's prayer, dares to petition that God's will be done and YHWH's reign be established. And, Psalm 126 is a poem that reassures us that in the dark times, when the eye of faith indeed sees and the discrepancy between how life should be and how life is pains the soul so deeply, that in such times of hope and lamentation God will be receptive to our cries of petition and that eventually the vision of YHWH's great work will be manifested by shouts of joy and exuberant laughter. And in that time, may all the glory be God's.

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Book Reviews

The People Called: The Growth of Community in the Bible. By Paul D. Hanson. Harper and Row, 1987. 564 pages.

By their very nature, biblical theologies have the potential to feel contrived and forced. Attempts to locate and trace a single unifying theological principle within such historically and theologically disparate texts as make up either the Old or New Testaments is an immense task. Finding an ordering factor in both the Old and New Testaments which then binds these testaments intensifies the challenge. Paul Hanson's explication of the biblical notion of community meets these challenges and offers a worthy theology.

The idea of community actually does double duty for Hanson. It serves, first of all, as a convenient vehicle which is able to carry the varying complementary and competing theologies of the Old and New Testaments. As the living and emerging people of God, the community is able to express and live out their revelation from God amidst changing historical circumstances. Community becomes the medium for theological expression.

Community is also the dynamic theological message which ultimately emerges from the Old and New Testaments. The author's theological presupposition that God is revealed as historical, relational and dynamic places just such an on-going requirement upon the community of believers. Hanson's descriptive task also assumes normative dimensions, with the authority arising from the living,

on-going community in a dialectical relationship with concrete, historical realities, grounded in its Center in the revelation of God.

The historical aspect to revelation and community plays an especially important role for Hanson, who logically follows a historical sequence in ordering his materials. The historical "beginning" is located in the early Hebrew community's confession of its deliverance from Egypt and covenant-making at Sinai. Here community finds its origins in a group of oppressed slaves who gratefully witness to their election and rescue from slavery. While acknowledging that the Exodus event appears to be historically and verifiably dubious, Hanson nevertheless affirms its validity and places great weight upon its theological results. From Exodus and Sinai comes the theological triadic notion of a community committed to righteousness and compassion, bound together and expressed in worship. The historical aspect lends an essential dynamism to this interpretation of community.

Righteousness, compassion and worship become the leitmotif which moves throughout the remainder of the book. Because God is just and merciful, so the people of God are to exhibit righteousness and compassion in response. Righteousness and compassion must be equal weights which create a balance for the community of God. Worship becomes the community's common expression of its purpose, calling and grateful response.

Righteousness, compassion and worship identify the community as its members relate to and with one another and God, but also with the larger world. "In you all the families of the earth will bless themselves." The community of God takes seriously this credo that is first expressed to a particular couple, Abram and Sarah, moves out to the extended tribes and clans, to the nation in the world, to the Christian communities, and ultimately to God's desire for reconciliation and restoration with all of humanity.

Hanson's unapologetic recognition that dynamism in the historical process, theological interpretation and relational aspects of community must necessarily create tension is one of the strong aspects of this theology. Just as God is not static and cannot be

reduced to abstract theological principles, so historical moments within the community of God which become solidified and rigid are held up to critique and correction. Hanson's theology therefore becomes open-ended as the on-going community of God, in all its wonderful diversity, continues to work out its calling and purpose in the world. For Hanson the emphasis is on righteousness and compassion as they are actively applied to God's concern for reconciliation and justice in the world.

Hanson is an Old Testament scholar. As such he is committed to the entire biblical witness. His exegetical and theological treatment of the New Testament is proportional and balanced. It locates and interprets Jesus the Messiah within Jesus' own dynamic historical and theological roots and places him firmly in salvation history as God's central event. Yet Hanson pointedly makes a strong case for the theological re-appropriation of the Old Testament. He chides the community of faith for its deeply-entrenched practice of over-emphasizing the New Testament to the exclusion of the Old. This truncated view has left the community of faith open to a self-centered theology at best and a blatant anti-Semitism at worst. Hanson's apologetic for a corrective to the Christian's ill-informed negative appraisal of Torah is essential reading.

The Appendix, in which the author deals with his Underlying Presuppositions and Method, brings this ambitious effort to its conclusion. It is unfortunate that this valuable resource is located at the end of the volume where it is in danger of being overlooked as merely after-thoughts. The author carefully examines his presuppositions concerning God's calling and purposes in the world, along with the tensions which necessarily result from the recognition of dynamism and historical realities in the theological enterprise. A good deal of mental work and much of the driving force for the book is to be found in this section. Unfortunately the only underlying presuppositions which the author acknowledges are theological. A treatment of such personal determinatives as gender issues, social location and denominational affiliation and how these impinge on his theological and world view would have been a welcome addition.

As a woman I was heartened by Hanson's attempts at inclusivity of language and the sensitive recognition that women were indeed part of the community throughout its entire history. While the author lifted up feminist concerns, the theology's agenda was not centered on women's community and women's stories. Much work remains yet to be done in order to gain a clearer picture of women's place and influence within the theological and worshipping community through the ages.

This interpretation of community appears to be overly optimistic in places, i.e. during the period of the Tribal League. The author highlights an equality and commonality which at times felt forced. There is not sufficient documentation for such egalitarian claims in any time period, including our own.

The People Called would be a valuable addition to any personal theological library. Since it is historical and exegetical the continuing scholar and pastor will find it a valuable resource for study and sermon preparation.

— KATHRYN L. DE WITT

Mapping the Moral Domain: A Contribution of Women's Thinking to Psychological Theory and Education. Edited by Carol Gilligan, Janie Victoria Ward and Jill McLean Taylor, with Betty Bardidge. Harvard University Press, 1988. 324 pages.

It was just this past Sunday, July 9, 1989, as this review goes to the printer, that *The New York Times'* front page headlines read, "Shortage of Qualified New Clergy Causing Alarm for U.S. Religions." (This headline—at the same time when highly qualified women, holding M. Div. degrees from Princeton Theological Seminary and barely containing their eagerness for leadership opportunities in the church, were scraping and scrambling to find positions as associate pastors in the larger churches and as solo pastors in the way out-of-the-way parishes of the U.S.—the same U.S. whose religions are seeking ways "to recruit career candidates.") Why the search? Why the alarm? Why were religious leaders warning that the nation faces a loss of moral leadership?

We are living in an era in which individuals are breaking free from authoritarianism in its several manifestations. It is an age in which the traditional authority of the church is rightly under fire, and the emergence of the oppressed to positions of responsibility is not far behind. In our church and in our society, who shall have authority and who shall be authoritative is suddenly up for grabs; and the shift from oppression toward freedom is predictably enough causing not a little chaos and concern. Traditional moral leaders find it very difficult to recognize and accept the authority of those who would assume it today. Though all women and men suffer in the authoritarian system which has been our reality, it is utterly appropriate to mention as examples of the more radically oppressed, all people of color, and women. More than anyone, women need the support, the respect, and the equal value which is rightly, justly ours, to assume the new responsibilities of authority and moral leadership, and we look to researchers in the areas of theology, psychology and education for help with our task of assuming moral leadership.

Carol Gilligan—professor of education at Harvard—and her colleagues have recently published their research of morality: *Mapping the Moral Domain*. Gilligan explains her interest in adolescence as having begun when she studied Erik Erikson's *Young Man Luther*, and as now being anchored in an approach which she characterizes as a reach into reason to join the humanistic faith in the power of education with the insights of modern psychology. She explains less clearly her interest as an educator in morality, but she approaches the study of morality with the conviction that adolescence may be a critical time for moral education. Gilligan asserts that she is attentive in her studies to a moral voice that she believes reveals the lineaments of an alternative world view. *Mapping the Moral Domain*, a collection of essays with the same premise, is an exercise in that "attentiveness." It is a collaborative effort to reconsider adolescent development in light of studies of girls and women, who have long been ignored and devalued in studies by traditional psychologists of human development. For the authors' intent we indeed may be grateful. Gilligan's work has contributed

enormously to the newly opened dialogue between traditional and feminist scholars, a dialogue which, though often painful and frustrating, bears the fruit of raised consciousness and openness to further discussion. Traditional scholars have been more open to listening to Gilligan's voice. Though perhaps they listen in part because they need not be so threatened by a theory which denies the importance of autonomy for women, nevertheless, they listen. These are times when academia turns its collective ear, perhaps in desperation, but in cautious interest to what women have to say, to what women think, to what it is women want and need, by their own definitions. Though Gilligan speaks for only a faction of feminism, at least she has the polite, if not fully respectful, attention of the academic world.

One of the difficulties we currently have, however, in problem solving and conflict resolution and in theoretical construction, is that increasingly, writers in different fields are expressing their theories in terms which have significantly varying definitions in several contexts. This may be a difficulty for Gilligan's theoretical construction. Gilligan et al., attempt in this current volume of essays to provide evidence for their thesis that there are two different moral voices, two frameworks for problem-solving, two different moral orientations. One orientation, they maintain, is organized around justice concerns, which the authors identified far more frequently and strongly with boys' concerns. The other orientation is organized around care concerns which the authors maintain would not have been identified at all had they not interviewed girls and women. In essay after essay, conclusion after conclusion, the repeated association of care concerns with girls' and women's morality and justice concerns with boys' and men's morality and the concurrent effort to prove the equality or superiority of the care focus over the justice focus is highly problematic. It is clear that, in spite of Gilligan's stated intentions to the contrary, she and her colleagues in the field of education have put forth theory not fully informed by current psychology. Their repeated association of autonomy with alienation, justice with aloofness,

dependence with love, for example, is misleading for the reader not well versed in contemporary psychology.

Gilligan discerns correctly enough a difference in the orientations and world views of boys and girls. These differences frequently manifest themselves, but they are differences determined by other forces, including gender, to be sure, but not only gender. Furthermore, it is established well enough in feminist theory that any orientation in our sexist reality, if it is considered "feminine," will be devalued in one way or another, so it is helpful to have this reality articulated, as centuries of valuing women's ways of being will be required to undo the history long centuries of devaluing women.

However, it seems that Gilligan here, as in her first book, is still struggling against the specific conclusions reached by her former teacher, Lawrence Kohlberg. She is still working against those conclusions of her former mentor who posited the morality of females as inferior to that of males. That she works so hard to "reinterpret" Kohlberg's theory is both understandable and desirable. However, her approach, over and against, as it is, Kohlberg's, appears to inhibit a more creative theoretical construction. What is worse for her and for feminist theory is that her (more subtextual than textual) repudiation of Kohlberg's sexist theory, is simply not persuasive.

Neither Gilligan nor the other authors make a persuasive argument for a distinct and separate difference in morality orientations which may be explained primarily by gender difference. It is true that they do not wish to explain the difference by gender alone, only to point out that to ignore the voices of girls and women is to miss an alternative world view. With that very important tenet one cannot argue. Boys and girls, and men and women, do see the world differently, in part because they are male and female, and the world most certainly values the way the men and boys see it in powerful and exclusive ways. But there is much greater sociological and psychological complexity to the difference than is discussed in this work! Gilligan does not engage recent major developments in psychoanalytic and other psychological theory such as that of

narcissism (Kernberg, Kohut, Kristers), for example, which could have informed and added depth and power to this discussion of different orientations and world views.

Instead she runs risks: by affirming the status quo of human development, by never suggesting the education of parents of young children for the essential changes in child care arrangements which could change dramatically the world views of boys and girls; by associating a care focus rather exclusively with girls; and by suggesting but not proving theoretically that girls and women are morally, and so in other ways, equal or superior.

The question of equality and superiority can be put aside here, especially because Gilligan's argument is inadequate to prove such a valuable theory. By associating the care focus more exclusively with girls, the risk remains that the notion of women's caring as being superior will catch on strongly—again—for a number of reasons, not the least of which is that it sets women up for the reinstatement and perpetuation of traditional mythologization and idealization which by any other name is misogyny. Secondly, the association of a care focus primarily with girls and women helps to reproduce the "mothering," of which Nancy Chodorow writes as problematic, and the symbiotic complementarity pointed out by Dorothy Dinnerstein; and both of these problems with the status quo could be eased and eventually alleviated by education and counseling rather than affirmed as somehow natural and good.

Though Gilligan et al., report in a number of places in this book that there was evidence of the care orientation for boys, just as there was justice orientation for girls, inexplicably little attention is focused on these similarities between boys and girls or the deeper questions of why and how the similarities and differences occur. Instead, the attention is overwhelmingly and repetitively focused throughout the essays on the differences between the two. It is the repetitiveness and inattentiveness to the complexities of early childhood development and their connections to adolescent development that render Gilligan's theory weak. In repeated instances, Gilligan has observed that people tend to organize expressions of conflict and choice largely in terms of justice or care in what she

calls a “focus phenomenon.” These observations even led her to conclude that both women and men demonstrate both perspectives but tend to lose sight of or silence one voice in arriving at decisions or in justifying choices they have made. However, instead of arguing persuasively for her conclusion or discussing thoroughly the number of reasons that her conclusion might or might not be true, Gilligan et al., rather, downplay any significance of the similarities, and devalue the justice focus in what proves to effect a not so subtle re-polarization rather than a re-mapping of the moral domain.

So, one might ask, will Gilligan’s theory help women toward fuller morality? Will it help prepare them to assume moral leadership? Probably not. Re-polarization is not a helpful approach to the ongoing problem of devaluation of women or the moral decline in our present age, especially when the single most important development of the first two years of life, after the development of basic trust, is the realistic sense of one’s own value and will and power apart from the other, i.e. autonomy. Without the development of autonomy the child is doomed to an adulthood of either alienation or dependence, not interdependence and cooperation; she or he is doomed to defiance or compliance, not authentic valuing, respecting, and caring, all synonymous terms; and she or he is doomed to being out of touch with feelings or buffeted about cruelly by the suffering of those with whom she or he comes in contact, unable psychically to separate the self from the others, and so, unable to value others for themselves, care for them authentically, powerfully, authoritatively.

Gilligan and her colleagues do women too little service to consistently undervalue the importance of autonomy in human development. It is an essential development for women and men, who have so far managed to develop more astutely in the direction of defiance and compliance. Individuals may appear autonomous because they are alienated and we, a people—male and female—of dependence, laboring still under authoritarianism, may see alienation and confuse it with autonomy, or we see compliance and confuse it with care or love.

We are a people—female and male—who in our transition from the authoritarianism of the church and state to a postauthoritarian era must prepare, by self examination, education, and counseling—to name but a few practical approaches—to assume moral leadership; and then we must assume it in whatever ways we can discover, whether we are recognized by current leaders as moral leaders or not. If we wait for “the” religious leaders of the U.S. who are alarmed because of the crisis in authority, and who are searching everywhere for moral leadership, it might be too late. If we as the moral leadership accept a morality of care, dependence, and connection which is uninformed by a morality of justice, independence, and autonomy—if we do not plan consciously and intentionally to strive with all our mights for reciprocity, equal respect, and our rights in relationship in all contexts, it is too late already.

— ANTOINETTE GOODWIN

Feminine Soul: The Fate of an Ideal. By Marilyn Chapin Massey. Beacon Press, 1985. 219 pages.

Feminine Soul: The Fate of an Ideal is an argument within an argument for a radical, women-centered spirituality. Marilyn Chapin Massey builds the central argument for the transformative potential of feminine soul on German romantic texts. Here the author probes the origins of what she calls feminine soul. This ideal, generated by men to control women, nevertheless contained revolutionary elements that threatened the established order. Therefore this knowledge of women’s spiritual potential was suppressed. The author insists that the revolutionary, transformative potential of what she calls feminine soul has not been given its due by feminists that see gender as socially constructed. The wider, encircling argument of the book is this: if women themselves in the present time embrace their unique spiritual potential, or soul, and control this ideal, they could tap this transformative potential, and inspire a totally new order. Following some radical feminists, the author

calls women to recover the lost knowledge of the feminine soul, which includes the divine feminine.

The author begins with the question, "Can an appeal to women's unique spiritual qualities lead to more than a trap?" (p. 5). She hopes to prove the affirmative answer correct. Chapter one includes an original and important answer to Hester Eisenstein who charged that radical feminists have substituted a new spirituality for a new politics, and that feminism should be recalled to its roots within the liberating theories of the west. As Massey argues for a women-centered use of religious power, she claims it is not radical feminists who abandoned liberating theories, but rather the liberating theories themselves have rent spirituality and politics. Drawing on feminist critiques of Marx and Freud, she shows the deficiencies of the liberating theories of both Marx and Freud where women were addressed. According to Massey, the work of reproduction, which includes nurturing and intimacy, is suppressed in these theories and cut off from its political meaning. The recovery of the ideal of feminine soul, then, does not trap its feminist advocates in an apolitical sphere, according to Massey. But the question of the ideal's material effects on women, and its revolutionary possibilities depends largely on the textual evidence uncovered in the central argument.

The central argument is advanced beginning with chapter two, on the writings of German educator Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi. Using the analytical tools of Foucault, Massey shows how the ideal of women as naturally spiritual, good mothers functioned to turn mothers against infanticide in eighteenth-century Germany, a time in history when other deterrents had failed. This new ideal of woman was a reversal of earlier views that women were spiritually inferior to men. Two Pestalozzi texts, *Leonard and Gertrude*, and *How Gertrude Teaches Her Children* are analyzed against this local history of German biopolitics in chapters three and four. This ideal was intended to control women's bodies by binding them to familial duty, but it broke free in Massey's view, when feminine soul began to refer to a female god and to the female body.

Two other texts are investigated: *Henry of Ofterdingen* by Novalis and *Mother and Play Songs* by Friedrich Froebel, founder of kindergartens. In each case, representations of the ideal of woman as spiritually superior, or the ideal mother and nurturer are put forth, and are eventually suppressed or rebutted: Pestalozzi by Fichte, Novalis by Schleiermacher, and Froebel by the banning of kindergartens. Students interested in German romanticism will want to peruse her sometimes controversial readings of these texts. However, those interested in her overall feminist argument will find that it is the discussion of the Pestalozzi material which shows the author's method and the issues most clearly.

For Massey, the ideal of feminine soul leads on the one hand to a "female God" (p. 67) and on the other, to women's bodies. Massey is most convincing when she shows how an ideal was generated to control women's bodies. This she does most thoroughly with the political background to Pestalozzi. Did the ideal lead to a "female God"? The centrality of the mother in the second text, Pestalozzi's defense against his critics, seems to have convinced Massey that if the mother is in God's place (to the child) then God is Mother. Her citations, however, show that God is like a father, and like a mother (p. 79). This mix of masculine and feminine imagery is radical to be sure. But the author fails to show that the ideal leads to "a female God" (p. 67). It may qualify as women-centered, but not as a complete reversal of the father image. Further, the transformative potential of a female God is simply assumed.

Did the ideal contain elements which could potentially liberate, rather than constrain women's bodies? The argument from suppression backwards to recover the memory of transformative potential bypasses the divine feminine, and would seem rather to indicate that the depiction of the impoverished Gertrude as the foundation of moral education—eradicated in Fichte—was dangerous. Proving that the idealization of women had transformative potential would be problematic, since it was women's bodies that were controlled by the ideal. Transformative potential seems to lie in the historical novelty of the idea that women have religious

authority. Massey charts the idea, going back to Luther's transfer of religious instruction to the house father. However radical Pestalozzi's idea that poor women had innate spiritual authority, no material effects for poor women, other than control, are shown. Perhaps this is why the author herself seems to magnify the feminine imagery for deity, and its dangerousness.

The textual evidence seems to establish that there was a male-defined tradition which idealized women as caregivers and nurturers, and that it contained significant parallels to points made by contemporary radical feminists about women's difference from men. It is also shown that ideals have material effects. So we are left with the author's hope that if women resurrect and control these ideals, the material effects on women will change from bad to good, from constraint to a new culture.

Of particular interest to students of feminist thought are the first and the final chapter. The final chapter completes the plea for a new ideology and a new religion of the feminine. In chapter one the author engages most of the important feminist literature of the last two decades, as well as the now classic *Second Sex* by Simone de Beauvoir. Both primary sources in feminist thought such as Gilligan, Daly, Rich, Rowbotham, Cixous and Irigaray, as well as important secondary treatments, such as that of Hester Eisenstein are lucidly and succinctly recapitulated. The question of women's "unique spiritual qualities" is intertwined with the whole discussion of women's difference from men, of what it consists, and whether this difference is biologically given or socially constructed. A negative estimation of what she calls feminine soul has been prevalent in that feminism which has seen gender as socially constructed.

Massey turns to those feminists who seem to invoke once again the idea of women as the morally or spiritually superior (or unique) sex. Massey sees this move as the "rebirth of the feminine soul." What are women's "unique" spiritual qualities? A brief summary of the work of Carol Gilligan on women's moral development and the ethic of care indicates qualities such as an emphasis on connection in human relationships, and the reality of change. The source of these qualities may be women's oppression (social

construction), or (biology) “women’s bodies, . . . the fact that women bear children” (p. 7). Following Rich, women are said to oppose the present order of “death” characterized by “quantification” and “abstraction” (p. 7). Some French feminists hold that women’s more “diffuse” sexuality yields ways of thought and expression that are multiform (p. 8). To the list of qualities, then, we might add the generation of difference, which is attested by Mary Daly (p. 8). This list, which is itself fluid, gives content to the notion of the genius of women.

A major problem with the author’s term “feminine soul” is that it implies women’s spiritual uniqueness, and not merely their socially constructed difference from men. It must be objected that Gilligan cannot be used to establish what may be the spiritual qualities of women, only to qualify this list on some other basis as “unique” to women. As Massey herself points out, the attributes of the caring ethic are not restricted to women (p. 6). It is not always clear when women are seen as different, or unique, or superior.

The reader has to wait for a definition of feminine soul, and is given some clarification toward the end of the first chapter. The author gives two referents to her use of the term “feminine soul”: “[it refers] . . . both to the object of a historical belief and to the genius of women about which radical feminists write” (p. 26). But were not women’s bodies and souls idealized? Thus the ideal was an ideal of women, not an ideal of women’s soul. The term “ideal” in the sense of a distinct romantic idealization of women would not have prejudiced the author’s investigation, and would have been more clear. The parallels uncovered between men’s ideology and feminists’ revolutionary dreams would be all the more astonishing.

These astonishing parallels between a male tradition and present feminists have not settled the issues Massey raises, but they put the argument on new ground. Massey thus forced open the question of women-centered spirituality in such a way that it cannot be lightly dismissed. Her book remains a helpful guide and an imaginative contribution to an ongoing debate.

— THELMA MEGILL-COBLER

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